

SOME  
DISTINGUISHED  
AMERICANS

HARVEY O'HIGGINS



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Charles Elmer Runnels

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Christmas 1922

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SOME DISTINGUISHED  
AMERICANS



Books by  
HARVEY O'HIGGINS

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SOME DISTINGUISHED AMERICANS  
THE SECRET SPRINGS  
FROM THE LIFE

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HARPER & BROTHERS  
*Established 1817*

# Some Distinguished Americans

*Imaginary Portraits*

BY

HARVEY O'HIGGINS

*Author of*

"THE SECRET SPRINGS," "FROM THE LIFE," ETC.



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*First Edition*

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SOME DISTINGUISHED  
AMERICANS



# SOME DISTINGUISHED AMERICANS

## I. HENRI ANTHON

"For Anthon is to American art what Poe is to American literature."

—J. Sydney Bartle, in *International Art*.

### 1

WHEN you see Rome and the dome of Saint Peter's, you are supposed to say to yourself: "Oh, of course! Michelangelo!" And when you see Saint Paul's in London, you know that you are looking at a memento of Sir Christopher Wren. But when you see the sky line of New York and the towering white Broadway Building, do you cry: "Ah! Henri Anthon!" Do you? Certainly not.

Do you even know that this sacred Fuji-yama of Manhattan is Anthon's monument? No. Nor do any of the thousand other enthusiasts who have etched it, painted it, photographed and sonnetized it, reproduced and glorified it in every medium of artistic expression. Yet it was Anthon who first brought the Broadway Building into the office of its creator—on the sheet of a scratch pad, if you

are to believe Anthon's account of it—and asked, carelessly: "How about that?"

The head of the firm took it. He just took it, as Anthon has described the scene—just took it, and no more.

"Yes," he said, after a moment. "That has possibilities." He pulled his ear, studying it. "Decidedly," he said. "Decidedly. Yes. I could make something of that." And Anthon went back to his drawing board in the drafting room, smiling secretly at the secret gleam in the architect's eye.

Anthon has explained that he smiled secretly because the Broadway Building was a joke to him, and he had foreseen that his famous employer would take it seriously, and his famous employer *had* taken it seriously. So has everyone else from that day to this. They have none of them suspected the humor of it. Yet, according to Anthon, he had said to himself: "New York doesn't build cathedrals to Saints Peter and Paul. It builds them to Saints Profit and Loss. Why not make the Broadway Building look like what it ought to be—a temple to the faith that is in us?" And grinning, with one eye closed against the fume of his cigarette, he made a quick pencil sketch of an office building in Gothic architecture, like a great cathedral gleaming white, with a tower that soared like a spire. He chuckled, holding it off to get its general effect. "Lord!" he said. "It's a go!"

It was. He had found something that the whole

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staff had been seeking. He had found a plan for the Broadway Building worthy of the sum of money to be spent on it. He had designed a monument to himself that was destined to be as conspicuous as the Great Pyramid, although his name is not on it, any more than the name of the Egyptian architect is on that tomb of Cheops.

### 2

We looked at it together, once, from the deck of a Jersey ferryboat.

"A sense of humor," Anthon said, "is a wonderful thing. A wonderful thing! That edifice ought to be called 'Anthon's Folly.'"

He was on his way to Hoboken to take the Holland Line to Boulogne and Paris. He was as happy as if he were ascending bodily to Heaven. Paris at last!

"Why not smile?" he asked me.

I did not feel like smiling. I was thinking of Grace Aspinwall, who had created Anthon as truly as Anthon had created the Broadway Building. And he was certainly *her* "Folly."

"Well," he said, "you always did take life sacramentally. How are you getting on?"

He had been crossing the ferry in a taxicab, with his hand-baggage and his steamer-rug. He had seen me inhaling the breezes on the stern of the boat. We had not met for years. We have never

met since. Yet he greeted me, and parted from me, as casually as if we saw each other every other day. We did not say a word about his past. We talked only of his trip to Paris.

"When do you expect to be back?" I asked, at parting.

"Never," he said, "as long as that endures," waving his hand at his masterpiece. "I'm afraid they'll find out that I did it on them. Good-by!" And he climbed into his taxi, grinning—little "Hank" Anthon, with his Parisian mustache, his Murger necktie, and his morality of Montmartre—although he had never been nearer Montmartre than Coney Island.

## 3

It is as if a clever landscape artist should claim that he had created the Alps. And, nevertheless, it is true, except for one vital detail. Anthon did not do the design as a joke.

The proof of that fact is to be found in the seventh number of his *Bibelot*. Or don't you know about his *Bibelot*? It was a sort of amateur magazine which he and his wife published "every now and then," some years ago. He etched the designs for it, and she wrote the verses, and they printed it in their studio, at night, on a little handpress for which she set the type and he made the plates. They called it a "bibelot" because they had the mistaken idea that the word "bibelot" meant a

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booklet. It scarcely paid expenses while they were publishing it, but a complete set of its ten numbers, uncut, sold for fifteen hundred dollars the other day. It has become a literary curiosity.

There is a plate in No. 7, illustrating a poem called "The City," by Grace Aspinwall; and in that plate the sky line of New York culminates in the aspiring episcopal tower of the Broadway Building. The etching was made years before the architect was even given the commission to design the building—as the date on the magazine shows—and some one has lately quoted that fact as an example of some sort of occult prevision. (I think it was Rupert Hughes.) The truth is that Anthon did the etching from his imagination, fantastically, and then unconsciously reproduced his dream tower as a design for the Broadway Building, and submitted it to his employer as a joke, unaware that his original conception had been serious and poetic.

And there you have a sample of the kind of thing that used to puzzle us in Anthon. There was always a shocking discrepancy between his art and his personality. In his work in the *Bibclot*, he was of the school of Aubrey Beardsley, though without even Beardsley's mirthless humor. His subsequent series of "Manhattan Nights" has been hailed as showing a technic that is "a combination of Meryon's solid gruesomeness with Whistler's grace"; and a monograph in *International Art* has announced authoritatively that "Anthon is to Ameri-

can art what Poe is to American literature." Yet personally he seemed to have neither purposes, nor ideals, nor even serious opinions as an artist. At one time his studio was much frequented by a group of painters and writers who were in revolt against established art—the group that afterward published *The Free Voice*—and to all the discussions about art that were never-ending among them, I heard him contribute only one quotable expression of opinion. In reply to an artist who contended that art was properly "a criticism of life" Anthon said: "Well, why not? It would only be fair—since life is so often a criticism of art."

Certainly, *his* art was never a criticism of life. Neither was his life a criticism of his art. They seemed to be entirely divorced from each other. And though almost nothing has been written about his life, and reams have been written about his art, I think his life was the more interesting. It was the more significant. And, unlike his art, it had a moral.

Take his first meeting with Grace Aspinwall.

### 4

One night, in the spring of a year in the later 'nineties, she was crossing Madison Square, on her way from her work. She passed a policeman as he stopped to rouse a man who was asleep on a bench. The man did not rouse. He toppled over across

the iron bench arm; his hat fell off and a loose package of drawings slid from his lap and scattered on the asphalt pavement of the walk.

She stooped to pick them up. "He's an artist," she said, looking at them, surprised.

The policeman glanced over his shoulder at her with an air of saying: "Well, suppose he is? A drunk's a drunk."

She saw that the man on the bench was a young man, pale and unshaven, but scrupulously shabby, and manifestly not a dissipated wreck.

"He has fainted!" she said, and she began to search in her hand bag for her bottle of smelling salts.

The policeman straightened up and watched her. She was dressed in the shirt-waisted, tailored suit of the business woman of that day. She looked as trim and proper as a school-teacher. The eye of the law acquitted her of any predatory designs upon the helpless, and then relapsed into official indifference again, as far as she was concerned.

She sat down beside the artist, supported him against her shoulder, and held the salts to his nose. The officer unbent to pick up the fallen hat and drop it on its owner's insensible head.

The man came to his senses with a tremulous long breath. "What?" he said, bewildered. "Oh! Yes. Thanks."

His teeth chattered suddenly, as loud as castanets. It was a chilly, misted April night. He

sat up and straightened his hat with a shaking hand, as if reasserting his right to privacy and independence.

She put away her smelling salts and rose.

The policeman resumed his beat without a word.

She hesitated, looking after him as he went.

She asked the man on the bench: "Can you get home all right?"

"I could," he said, hoarsely, "if the sidewalks wouldn't teeter."

"Where do you live?"

He thought a moment. "That's so!" he said. He laughed to himself, and it was a self-conscious laugh. "I don't need to go home." He passed his hand over his forehead, shoving back his hat. "I am home."

When she sat down again, on the edge of the seat, turned sideways toward him, he said: "That's right. Have a chair."

He had delicate features of a dark pallor, girlishly long eyelashes, soft eyes, a weak but amiable mouth. She ignored his facetiousness as if she were a trained nurse who understood the feeble jocularities of weakness.

"Have you had anything to eat?"

"I've lost my appetite. . . . I lost it two or three days ago."

She took his drawings from him. "You're an artist?"

"Thank you," he said.

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She frowned. "I asked you if you *were*."

"I'd be willing to leave it to you."

"I don't know anything about it," she explained, exasperated. "I'm a stenographer."

"Well, why not?" he replied. "We can't *all* starve."

She rose impatiently, with the drawings in her hand. "If you're willing to let me," she said, in a tone of defensive harshness, "I can get you something to eat in a restaurant." And she added, to soften it: "I've not had dinner, myself. I was kept late—in the office."

"Delighted, of course." He tried to get to his feet with an air of gallant eagerness, but his legs seemed to fail him. He stumbled and swayed. She caught his arm to steady him. "If you—" he gasped—"have some place—to lie down."

"Haven't you any friends?"

He shook his head, trying to control the trembling of his jaw.

She looked around her vaguely, embarrassed. "I suppose I—"

"I don't wish to boast," he said, almost in a whisper, "but I haven't even any acquaintances."

"I suppose I could get a cab. My room's on Twenty-third Street. Near Fourth Avenue."

He turned unsteadily in that direction. "It's my head. Not my legs. I can walk."

She took his arm in silence. It was as thin as a wrist, and he was shaking continuously, either from

weakness or from the cold. They started slowly toward Twenty-third Street. "I'm—I'm sorry to refuse an invitation to dinner," he apologized, "but I really couldn't eat—just yet."

His voice went hoarse toward the end of his sentence. He cleared his throat to pretend that it was not the hoarseness of exhaustion. That touched her.

"Don't talk," she said. "I can give you some dinner."

"Thanks." He coughed again. "Do you live alone?"

Unfortunately, his tone sounded as nearly flirtatious as he had strength to make it. She replied, flatly, curtly, defensively:

"Yes. I live alone. My name is Aspinwall. Grace Aspinwall. I work in an architect's office, doing shorthand and typewriting. My people don't live in New York. I'm alone here. My room's in a building where there are studios, but it isn't a studio. I don't know anybody in the house, and no one knows me. I never spoke to anyone in the street before, and I don't suppose I ever will again."

He made a deprecating sound.

"The policeman seemed to think you'd been drinking. I saw that you'd fainted. Your drawings had fallen on the walk. I picked them up. That's how I knew you were an artist. I don't want you to misunderstand me."

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"It would be difficult," he murmured.

"Very well, then." She turned him east toward Fourth Avenue.

He sighed. "Well," he said, in a shivering imitation of her manner, "my name's Henry Anthon. I came here, several months ago, from Columbus, under the illusion that I was an illustrator. I arrived with very little money and I spent half of it the first week. I've been going the rounds of the magazine offices, with those drawings, like a beggar showing his sores ——"

"It doesn't matter," she interrupted. "You needn't tell me. I just wanted you to understand that I'm not the sort of person ——"

"Pardon me," he said. "I'm physically weak—and financially prostrate—but I still have moments of lucidity. I can see that you're not the sort of person ——"

"Very well," she ended it. "That's all that's necessary."

He glanced at her sidelong and smiled to himself. She had a clear-cut profile, regular but severe. She could have been a beauty if she had given her mind to it, but she denied her charm with an expression of face that carried her fine features as if they were a weakness to be overcome and a temptation to be on her guard against.

Anthon once said of her: "She's as beautiful as one of those Grecian temples on Fifth Avenue—that turn out to be savings banks." And Anthon

always had a Bohemian pose of disrespect for savings banks.

She led him across Fourth Avenue to an old house on the north side of Twenty-third Street. It had a second-hand bookshop in its basement, and offices and studios on its upper floors. "You'll have to climb three flights," she warned him, in the hallway.

"If you'll go ahead and open your door," he said, "I'll get up—in time."

"No. I'll help you."

"Please don't," he begged. "You couldn't, unless you carried me." She took his trembling arm again. "No. Please," he insisted. "Let me do it my own way." He leaned against the newel post, resisting her.

"Very well." She ran briskly up the stairs and disappeared.

He followed, step by step, steadying himself with a shaking grip on the banister, lifting his knees as if he were pulling his feet out of sucking mud. At the first landing he sat down a moment to get his breath. He finished the second flight on all fours.

She saw him from the hall above, having opened her door, lit her gas jet, and returned to look for him; and she stood clutching the balustrade and biting her lips as she watched.

At the second landing he collapsed. She took off her hat and coat, threw them into her room,

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and hurried down to him. Lifting him to a sitting posture, she put one of his arms around her neck, gripping his wrist, and took him around the waist with her free arm, and raised him to his feet. He muttered some feeble remonstrance. She carried him up the final flight, in that way, silently, with a steady strength that was part of her practical efficiency.

Her room—a narrow hall bedroom—had a studio couch along its wall, with the head to the one window. She lowered him to the couch in her arms, and took off his hat, and arranged the cushions for his head while she held him against her breast. And she stretched him out finally on his back, unresisting, with his eyes closed, twitching and shuddering helplessly in the spasms of an internal chill.

She did not stand to look at him.Flushed and breathing shortly through dilated nostrils, her lips pressed together in defiance of the conventions, she hastened to shut and lock the door. Then she set about lighting her gas stove to make a hot drink for him, hurried by the audible shaking of the couch behind her, though she did not turn to glance at him.

The stove was a little stand of two burners, connected by a rubber pipe with a stopcock below the gas jet; and it stood on the top of a bookcase whose lower shelves, curtained in green rep, held her pans, dishes, and provisions. She emptied a

half bottle of milk into a saucepan and put it on to heat.

A green-rep screen beside the door hid a wash-bowl and a mirror. This was her dressing room. When she had filled a kettle with water there, and set it on the stove, she took a typewriter from a small table at the foot of the couch and spread a tablecloth. She was quick and anxious, but competent in all her movements, absorbed, with a capable grace.

She had a bowl of milk hot in no time. When she turned to him with it she found him raising himself uncertainly on his elbow. "Don't get up," she ordered.

She sat down beside him, supporting him with an arm, and, holding the bowl between her knees, she began to feed the milk to him with a table-spoon, maternally, but with an embarrassed flush of color. He could not see her face. He watched her hand, sipped the milk, and said, gratefully, "It's immense!"

When the bowl was empty she got up to let him sink back on the cushions, and she stood to look down on him with a first faint twinkle of amusement in reply to his smile.

"Thanks," he said. He had stopped shivering. "I feel better already."

"I can't give you a real dinner," she explained. "I have only breakfast things here."

"You needn't worry about that," he said. "You

can give me last Monday's breakfast. I haven't had it yet."

He looked very young and boyish in spite of his unshaven chin. He was dressed in thin clothes, worn shiny, but well brushed. His feet were small in low shoes that were shabby—and silk socks. There was about him an air of unbeaten saucy pride that touched her.

"I'll give you tea," she smiled, "and a poached egg."

Hers was a slow smile, unexpectedly dimpled; and though it was a little withdrawn and aloof, it had a quality of forgiveness that made it seem sympathetic.

"May I help you? Not that I know how!"

She shook her head. "It won't take me a moment."

He watched her breaking the eggs and decanting them from their shells into the hot water, measuring the heaping spoonfuls of tea, filling the teapot from the steaming kettle, and propping the slices of bread on the sides of the toaster. The gas sang; the toast smelled; the girl was good-looking.

"I think this is great fun," he said.

"Do you?" She did not raise her eyes from her work.

"I wouldn't have missed it for—not for an order from a magazine."

"No?"

"I understand, now, why I didn't get an order—and why they turned me out of my room—and why I fainted in the street."

"Yes?"

"Yes. It was so I'd enjoy this properly. Philosophic reflection: Death is made painful so you'll enjoy arriving in heaven."

She busied herself setting the table, without replying. And there was something tragic in her face. He saw it.

"What are you thinking?" he asked, pertly.

She went back to the stove. "That it was lucky for you I had smelling salts. You might have found yourself in jail."

"In hell, in fact, instead of heaven. Think of that! Why do you carry smelling salts?"

"I fainted, once, myself."

"Oh." Her tone had laconic implications; he considered them. "Have you been through it, too?" he asked. She did not answer. She pretended to be preoccupied with the eggs. "Of course you have!" he said. "That's why you helped me. Where did *you* come to?"

"I don't want to talk about it."

"You ought to," he advised, cheerfully. "Nothing's half so bad if you talk about it. You think it's a fox gnawing at your vitals, and then you talk about it and find it's—well, a flea."

Her silence reproved his indelicacy in mentioning fleas. She brought him his eggs, his toast, and

a cup of tea on a breakfast tray. "Can you prop yourself up in the corner? And take this on your knees?"

He piled the cushions behind him. "I know you," he said. "You'll do anything in the world for a person except give him your confidence." She laid her own place at the table, and sat down to it. "As for me," he went on, "I have what some one called 'the terrible gift of familiarity'—although I don't suppose I have half your kindness."

They began to eat.

She asked, "Have you been—turned out of your rooms?"

He nodded, busy. "Room. Singular. I owe them three weeks' rent. They've kept my trunk. Nothing in it. Everything pawned."

"What do you intend to do?"

"Well, if this sort of thing will only happen when I faint, I'll keep on fainting."

She considered him over the rim of her teacup as she drank. In spite of his hunger, he ate good-manneredly. "Have you written home?"

"Did you?" he asked. "When *you* fainted?"

She colored, putting down her cup.

"You wouldn't think I had any pride," he said, "but I have. I'd die before I'd acknowledge to them that I'm defeated. They believe in me. They think I'm a genius. Maybe I am. I talk well, don't you think?"

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She replied, "I think I'd better do you another egg."

"Besides," he grinned, "I've been like Ibsen. I couldn't write letters, because I couldn't afford the stamps. This food is going to my head. Don't mind what I say. It's the champagne—which you pretend is tea. Tell me if I talk too much." He was flushed. His eyes were feverish. He drank the tea in excited, vinous sips.

She said, from the stove: "I don't know. It's so long since I heard anybody talk." And she said it as constrainedly as if it were a confession that had been wrung from her.

"I know," he chattered. "They'll speak to you if you speak to them, but you can't make them talk. I was a week in a boarding house. I used to talk at the table. It was like talking in the top gallery of the Metropolitan. As if I interrupted the music—of their mastication. They almost hissed me."

It was not what she had meant. "No one speaks in the office," she explained. "They're too busy. Except to dictate letters."

"Aren't they wonderful?" he cried. "I keep wanting to stop them on the streets and say, 'No, but tell me, when do you live?'"

She brought him his eggs and refilled his teacup.

"Please eat something yourself," he begged. "I don't mind doing all the talking, but eating!" He rattled his knife and fork on his plate gayly. "All that sort of music is best for four hands—duets."

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She replied, with a self-conscious awkwardness: "I'm not very hungry. And I'm afraid I never talk much."

However, she took his drawings from the chair on which she had left them, beside the door, and she sat down at the table, to sip her tea, with her eyes on the top picture. He waited for her verdict, amusedly, enjoying his eggs.

The first drawing was a pen-and-ink design, in an Aubrey Beardsley manner. It showed a great number of half-draped figures groping with outstretched hands through a sort of forest of bamboo stems. Some of the figures were much impeded by their heavy draperies that dragged behind them and clogged their feet. And their eyes were closed.

"Well, what do you make of that?"

"What is it?" she asked, frowning. "What do you call it?"

"I don't know." He grinned. "That's the way it came to me. What do *you* call it?"

"How do you mean, that's the way it came to *you*?"

He gulped his tea. "Why, that's the way I work. That's why I'm hopeless as an illustrator. I can't tell what I'm going to do till I see it on the paper. And I don't know what it is, when it's done, any more than anyone else does."

"I don't think I understand what you mean."

"Well, look." He pantomimed it. "You sit down in front of your drawing board with a sheet

of blank paper on it. Perfectly blank and smooth—or it will interfere. Then you stare at it and wait.” He stared hypnotically at his tray. “Until slowly you begin to get a picture on it. As if it were developing on a photographic plate—only dim. And you begin to draw it. And it comes clearer all around what you’re drawing. Till you’re finished. And it’s like that.”

She looked from him to the drawing, puzzled.  
“I see.”

“When it’s done, you make up names for it, if you want to. You can call that one ‘Life,’ say—or ‘Love’—or ‘Blind Souls.’ Evidently, it’s people trying to find one another. That’s what it looks like, anyway. I don’t know, any more than you do.”

“I see.”

She was listening to an explanation of Anthon’s art that would have interested some of his later critics. It did not interest her as much as it might have if she had understood how odd an individual his art really was. She thought it merely beyond her. She looked at the drawings and said nothing.

Many of them contained nude figures. She turned them over self-consciously. He laughed. “That’s another difficulty about the magazines,” he said. “I always see people without the disguises they wear. If I put clothes on them they look like dressed-up monkeys to me—organ grinders’ monkeys.”

One drawing seemed to be a nightmare of Broad-

way, and she was struck by the way he had lined up the buildings in perspective. She suggested that he might get work in an architect's office. He replied: "Or as a bricklayer. I know as much of one as the other."

"Well," she asked, at last, "what do you intend to do?"

"I wish I knew," he said. "I'd tell you."

She got up to take his dishes from him. He lay on his back, his hands clasped on his chest, fed, relaxed, and happy. He began to talk about himself lazily.

His art, as he saw it, had no commercial value. And there was apparently no way of giving it any. At home, he said, in Columbus, he had worked for a time on a newspaper, making chalk plates, but his work in that line had always been amateurish. "I couldn't do newspaper work here," he confessed. "I couldn't compete. I'm not in their class." And he had once done ads. for shop windows—lettering, chiefly—but New York had no windows for that sort of home-made advertising. "I can't do it as well as the print shops. I'm not professional enough." As a matter of fact, he had been unsuccessful in any form of applied art at home. "I can only do these weird things. I thought there'd be a market for them here. Apparently, there isn't."

She listened and watched, her elbows on the table, her chin in her hands. He lay smiling at the

ceiling, and admitting his defeat with an air of languid detachment.

"The truth of the matter is," he said, "I'm so sleepy, all at once, that I don't even know what I'm trying to say. I think if I had about five minutes ——"

His eyes closed, and he was asleep as suddenly as if he had fainted.

It was some minutes before she realized that he was unconscious of her. Then, although she did not move, a curious change came over her face—a look of still and penetrating contemplation, wide eyed and clairvoyant, as she studied him. He rested like a corpse, in deep exhaustion, his head sunken in the cushions, his body incredibly thin and flat, his breathing scarcely perceptible, his face sad in the meek surrender of closed eyelids and quiet lips. He had something of the dignified indifference of death about him, and all the pathos of pitiful humanity. His mask of smiling egotism had been touchingly laid aside. He seemed to have collapsed inside his clothes, and they were bunched and bagged and wrinkled on him with no pretense now of nattiness. His feet, toeing in helplessly, showed the holes in the soles of his shoes, without shame.

It was not merely these aspects of him that were reflected in her expression as she regarded him, item by item, from his lank hair to his worn heels. She, too, had laid aside a mask. She studied him—

as if she were a child that was no longer afraid, no longer self-defensive—with complete interest, almost hungrily. In the silence and loneliness of that room where she had never had a guest she appraised him as if he were some unconscious castaway on a desert island where she had been isolated. She looked and looked, and thought and thought, with no more movement than the shifting of her eyes from his face to his hands, from his hands to his feet. And in the record of their intercourse, those silent minutes were of more importance than all that had been said between them.

She turned from him to his drawings, and regarded them as judicially as if they were the exhibits before the court. When she rose, at last, it was with the inscrutable calm air of a mind made up. She went to her clothes closet and took a bathrobe from its hook—a serviceable garment of Turkish toweling—and spreading it gently over him she let it fall to cover him from neck to ankles. He did not stir. She looked down at his placid face. There was something poetic in its young exhaustion. She stared at him a long time. Then she gathered up the dishes and went to wash them in her hand bowl noiselessly; and all her movements were slow, absorbed, contented; and although she did not quite smile, a pleasant reverie brooded in her eyes.

She sat down again when she had tidied everything, and she prepared to read, but her mind

wandered from her book and she gazed at him in an absent-minded muse. He slept like a child. She reached from her bookshelf, stealthily, a type-written manuscript in a loose-leaf binder, and began to turn over the carbon copies of a great number of brief poems which she had filed there; and by the furtive way she glanced at him as she read—as if she were afraid that he might wake and catch her with them—it was evident that the verses were her own composition.

He did not wake. She hid her manuscript behind the bookease, took a sheet of typewriter paper from the drawer of the table, and wrote on it, in a firm, angular hand: "Gone to some friends for the night. Be back in time to cook breakfast." She laid this on the pillow beside his head, covered his feet with a skirt from the closet, put on her hat and coat, packed some things in a hand bag, turned down the light, and went out on tiptoe, closing the door gently behind her.

She was not going to friends. She had no friends to go to. She was going to a dollar-a-night hotel on Fourth Avenue where she knew no questions would be asked. She had been there before.

### 5

That was their beginning.

By the end of a week he was working in her room every day, sleeping in a Third Avenue doss house

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where he could get a bed for fifteen cents a night, and sharing her breakfasts and her dinners. He did not eat any midday meal.

"That's *my* contribution to my support," he said. He produced a number of drawings, but sold none. "I'm educating the editors," he explained. "The public is *next*." He accepted from her what little money he needed, without any pretense that he was merely borrowing it. "I'll not try to escape the obligations of gratitude," he said, "by assuring you that I'll pay you back. I hope you'll never need it enough for that. But don't give me more than twenty-five cents at a time. Greenbacks are like checks to me. I don't like to carry them around uncashed." And he talked a great deal about himself without learning, in return, anything about her.

His father, he told her, was a maker of picture frames who sold art materials, photographic supplies, stationery, and magazines in a little shop in which his wife assisted him behind the counter. He had never allowed his son to work there. He always said: "I might've been an artist, myself, if I hadn't been taught a trade." And he refused to let the boy help to earn his living until he was able to do it with his pencil--by lettering display cards for the family shop window. The elder Anthon, apparently, had talked about his son and boasted of his genius until he had convinced everyone of it, including the boy himself. Consequently, young

Anthon's departure for New York, to make himself famous, had been almost a civic event. And there was no possibility of going back to Columbus defeated. "Broad Street, Ohio," he said, "would never forgive me."

I have often wondered what Columbus thought of the monograph on Henri Anthon that appeared in the English edition of *International Art* a few months ago. "Born," it began, "in Vienna on May 13, 1873, of a French mother and an English father—an itinerant artist of whom nothing is known—he emigrated at an early age to America with his parents, who settled in a city of Ohio, called Columbus after the discoverer of the continent. The primitive culture of a frontier town gave Anthon *pere* little opportunity to practice his profession as a miniaturist, and he was driven to support his family by opening a stationer's shop in which he also made picture frames and sold the atrocious steel engravings of the period."

That Anthon never told Grace Aspinwall any such fairy tale about his parents is a tribute, probably, to the penetrating candor of her glance. She was a country girl. She admitted it. She admitted that she had been born on a farm and that she had taught in the village school. She had studied shorthand at night and she had come to New York as a stenographer, simply, as she said, "to get away." It was not till the second week of their acquaintanceship that she confessed she was

trying to sell poems to the magazines and he learned that she had come to New York with an ambition to set up as an author.

"Now I know you!" he cried. "I recognize you now! I thought your profile was familiar when I first saw you. Only, in all the pictures I've seen of you you'd lost your nose. You're the Sphinx."

At his first "Now I know you!" she had turned suddenly pale. And she blushed with guilty relief when he ended, "You're the Sphinx." He saw it and went on jocularly: "Talk about a woman keeping a secret! What else have you got hidden behind that stony calm?"

They were dining together in her room. She murmured, "Don't be silly," trying to hide her confusion by turning to look back at the coffee pot on the gas stove.

He reached her hand and held her. "Here," he said. "Play fair. I've not tried to conceal anything from you. And you've taken it all without giving back a word."

She did not try to release her hand, but she sat with her head averted. "I'm not concealing anything."

"Yes, you are. You're concealing yourself. And some day you'll blame me for not understanding you."

"You don't have to understand me."

"Certainly, I do—if I'm not to do you an injustice."

"I don't care whether you do me an injustice or not." She went to stir the coffee, needlessly.

"Fine!" he said. "Give the beggar a meal and slam the door on him. He can eat it on the front steps."

"No," she answered, in a shaking voice, her back to him, "it isn't that. I can't talk about myself—to anyone. I want to forget it."

Her tone moved him. He went to her and put his arm around her. She trembled but stood firm. "You've been doing everything in the world for me," he said. "I can't make any return except—in sympathy."

She murmured: "Don't! I don't want to be—unhappy—again."

It was, after all, a surrender. He took it as such. "All right," he said. "Beggars can't be choosers." He kissed her on the ear, inconsequentially, over her shoulder, and went back to his place at the table.

And that began his love making.

## 6

He had read largely of French literature in cheap translations, and his idea of a love affair was fictional and French. That is to say, a love affair to him was a sort of romantic escape from the responsibilities and realities of life into something spirited, poetic, adventurous—and predatory. The obvious truth is that the instinct of affection in him carried

little of its normal human desire to protect and be protected. He had been the spoiled darling of his parents. Because of his early talent they had always treated him as if he were a young god. Even in his affection for his mother he must have been too superior to feel a desire for protection and too selfish to feel a desire to protect. Consequently, like many a spoiled child, he was now incapable of real love.

Of course, he was as unaware of it as Grace Aspinwall was. He probably thought himself a very gallant lover. He was very gay and humorous about it. He invented teasing names for her—the Sphinx, Aglaia, Diana, the Vestal Virgin—and worked her into his drawings in every attitude of cold and godlike inscrutability. She took it very doubtfully at first, and then with the air rather of a mother whose practical devotion is being accepted humorously by a witty son. She did not altogether refuse his caresses, but she received them as if she knew that they meant nothing.

“Very well, Young Pathos,” he would say. “I’ll make you look happy yet.”

She wrote a little poem, secretly, to interpret a fairy drawing that he had made, and she sold the poem and its illustration to a children’s magazine, without telling him what she had done until she received the check for it.

“I kiss,” he said, “the hand that feeds me”; and he saluted her bent wrist cavalierly. “Now, let’s have a bust.”

No. He had to have summer clothes. It was June. And she went with him on Saturday afternoon to a men's outfitters, like a critical wife, and saw that he got good value for his money. Naturally, the clerk mistook them for a young married couple, and Anthon teased her about it on the street. She endured the teasing in a silence that puzzled him.

"I suppose," he said, "I'll have to cut your heart out before I find what's going on in it."

He found out something a few weeks later.

She had sold another poem and drawing, and with the money she rented the vacant studio adjoining her room, and furnished it for him surreptitiously. He was sincerely touched when she showed him what she had done.

"Now listen to me, Grace," he said. "I'll not use it unless you'll share it with me."

"Share it?"

"Yes. You might as well marry me. You're supporting me already. I can't do anything without you. You've picked me out of the gutter and put me on my feet—more or less. You might as well finish the job. You can't get out of it now, anyway. I'm no good without you."

"No," she said. "I can't."

"Can't?"

She shook her head and, putting him from her, she went to stare out the window.

"*Can't!*" he repeated, in a low tone.

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"No," she said, hoarsely. "I'm married already."

He put his hat on, as if she had turned him out. He sat down in helpless amazement. "Well, I'll be damned!"

She did not speak. She remained at the window, looking out as tragically as if it was her past that she saw there.

"Who is he?" he demanded.

She would not tell him.

"Where is he?"

"I don't know."

"But suppose he turns up here," Anthon cried, "and finds you ——"

"He doesn't want to find me. He didn't want to marry me. We never spoke to each other after we came out of the vestry. I left him at the gate."

"Oh well," he said. "That's no marriage at all. It wouldn't take a court five minutes to annul that."

She shook her head, still at the window. "No."

"What!"

She turned to him. "I can't explain it and I won't discuss it. But he daren't annul it, and I'll not."

"But *why?*"

"Because I won't admit that it happened."

"Won't ad —— What do you mean?"

"I mean that I'm married," she said, "and there's nothing to be done." And suddenly, flinging out her hands, she cried: "I won't talk about it! I won't—I won't talk about it!"

It was a threat of hysteria and it had the odd

effect of giving him back his self-possession. He took off his hat. "Very well, Mrs. John Doe," he said. "If you don't care, *I* don't. Are we going to have dinner in or are we treating ourselves to a restaurant?"

They went to a restaurant. They went to a play. They made, in fact, a silent and preoccupied evening of it together. They walked back to their rooms as mute as if they had quarreled. They opened their separate doors, in the glimmer of the hall light, morosely.

"Well," he said, "good night! I don't know why in thunder I'm behaving like this. I haven't any right. I'm just as grateful ——"

"Don't!" She put her hand out. He made a movement to take it. She caught his fingers in a spasmodic clutch of contrition and apology—and was gone before he could speak.

She behaved, next morning, as if nothing had happened. She seemed interested only in getting him curtains, a jute rug, a drawing table, a student lamp, and another check from a magazine to meet their increased expenses. She failed in the latter effort for so long a time that she took one of his fantastic architectural nightmares to the office and persuaded the firm to give Anthon a trial in the drafting room.

"You can work there in the mornings," she announced to him, "and have your afternoons and evenings free. It will more than pay your rent."

"I'm game," he said. "Whistler once worked for the Geodetic Survey, didn't he?" And he began to go to the office with her, every morning, as slyly dutiful as a mischievous child going to school.

Their relations were, apparently, merely friendly. She was more than ever uncommunicative and he had no idea of what was going on in her mind. Yet it was during this period that she wrote her mystical poem, "The Closed Garden," laying it down line by line, like the unblended vibrating colors of an impressionistic painting—each line complete in itself, yet almost meaningless by itself—in a technic that unconsciously expressed her desperate self-repression. If you take that poem at its face value, it is merely an oddly picturesque dream of color and music and the beauty of nature enchanted. But read it with the understanding that she is herself the closed garden, and it is as emotional and impassioned as the Song of Songs.

She was a month writing it. She rarely added more than two or three lines a day. She reread and rewrote it chiefly at night, in her own room. He did not know what she was doing. It is doubtful whether she really knew herself.

She was the victim of a deformity of spirit that was quite as fatal to happiness in love as his lack

of the protective instinct. The circumstances of her marriage evidently had given her a shock that had warped and stunted her puritanically. In her poems she could express the desires of her creative energy because they disguised themselves so that she did not recognize them. But in her life and in her relations with Anthon she would not let them express themselves at all. She was happy in a maternal instinct to protect him, and she was unhappy because in his jocular independence he neither sought protection nor gave it. Like Anthon himself, she was trying to live on terms which life will not accept. Their disaster was inevitable.

He began to make friends at the office, and these friends came to see him. Her position was, at once, equivocal. He teased her about it. "I'm not one to talk scandal," he said, "but you'll not be Mrs. John Doe much longer. You'll be Mrs. Don Juan. What are you going to do about that?"

He might have known that she would do something unexpected.

At first she refused to go on the streets with him; she ate rather furtive meals in his studio; and she shut herself up in her own room whenever his bell rang. He watched her amusedly.

"You certainly know how to make innocence look guilty," he congratulated her. "I think I'd better tell them you're my sister."

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He had to accept invitations without her. He ate luncheon with another stenographer, who flirted as openly as she chewed gum. And one evening he went out without making any explanation, remained away till after midnight, and returned with a carnation in his buttonhole.

"That girl will certainly marry me," he warned her, "if some one else doesn't. I'm wax in her hands. I melt."

It was next morning that she did the unexpected.

She came to breakfast with a rolled document in her hands, pale, after a sleepless night. She gave him the paper as if it were a death warrant. "What's up now?" he asked, nervously.

It was a marriage certificate to prove that Grace Aspinwall and Henry Anthon had been "united in holy matrimony" by the curate of a Chicago church, "according to the Form of Solemnization of Matrimony of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, and in accordance with the Laws of the State of Illinois."

For the moment it convinced him. He had a queer feeling that he had dreamed something of the sort and now held in his hand the evidence that it had not been a dream—that it had really happened.

"What!" he cried. "Where did you ——" And then he held the paper up to the light and discovered that the names and the date had been altered. "But this," he said, "this is ——"

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She gasped, strangled. "I've—I've changed it.  
It's the one I——"

"But it's no good."

She nodded dumbly. She knew that.

"Then why——"

"It'll do to show. People won't notice."

He looked at her, blank with amazement. She was twisting and pulling at her fingers, her eyes fixed on him in a painful dilation, her lips twitching. And abruptly she held out to him—a wedding ring.

She had so much the air and attitude of a guilty child mutely confessing some little theft, that he could hardly resist the nervous impulse to laugh at her. "But here!" he said, between amusement and pity, "you've simply destroyed your marriage certificate! You needed it to get your divorce."

"I can't. I can't get a divorce. I'd—I'd be ashamed to. And it would ruin *him*."

"Ashamed to! What do you mean?"

"He—he's a young clergyman. I made him marry me because he—I won't tell you! I won't tell anyone. They'd all guess—if they knew we'd been married. They—He—" She felt her way stiffly to the table and sat down.

Life had become suddenly unromantic to him. "Phew!" He blew a long breath of impatient depression and annoyance. He swore to himself at the marriage certificate. "Don't your people know about this?" he asked, flicking at it angrily.

“No.”

“And you won’t get a divorce because you don’t want them to know that he—that your young clergyman—betrayed you? Is that it?”

“Yes.”

He got up, and tossed the paper on the table beside her, and began to pace up and down the room. “What do your people suppose has happened to you?”

“Nothing.”

“Nothing?”

“I get letters from them at the office.”

“Well, I’ll be blowed!” He stood looking at her, his hands deep in his pockets. “And you’re prepared to marry me in this way, rather than —”

“I don’t want to marry you. I just wanted to fix it so we could *say* we were married.”

“Oh, really!” He was sarcastic. “And leaving my feelings entirely out of the question, how about your precious clergyman? What will he say when he hears it?”

“Nothing.”

“Nothing!”

“He’s afraid.”

“Afraid of you?”

“He’s afraid I’d tell. They’d know what had happened if they knew we’d been married that way. Besides, he’s religious. He took it as a—a sort of penance.”

“He married you as a penance!”

"No. I made him marry me secretly. I threatened to tell what—what had happened—if he didn't. And then when we came out of the church I told him he could go—I'd never see him again—I hated him. And he said—I don't know—that it was his punishment."

"It seems to me," he said, considering her expression, "you're punishing yourself as much as him."

"It would be worse if I—if I tried to get a divorce. The whole thing would come out. It—it would kill my father."

"Well," he cried, exasperated, "how about his finding out that you're here with me. Suppose some one recognized you on the street?"

"That's why I wanted to say we were married."

"Excuse me! I'm going to get out! I don't want a lifetime of scenes like this." He went to get his hat.

"No!" She rose in a frenzy of which he had not thought her capable. She ran to the door and stood with her back against it. "I can't," she panted. "I can't let you. I'm—I'm going crazy. I can't think of anything but—I can't sleep. I don't want anything except to help you, to look after you. I want you. I can't let you go. I can't face it again. It's too lonely. Just let me say we're married, so I can tell people and write home. Just let me say it, so I'll not be disgraced. Please! Please!" She wrung her hands. "Don't leave me."

“Oh, hell!” He flung his hat across the room.  
“I don’t care. Do what you like.”

So she became “Mrs. Anthon,” and the terms and conditions of their tragedy were set.

To all outward appearances it was a love match of the deepest devotion—on her part, at least. In a crowded room with him, it seemed impossible for her to keep her eyes from him. And it was, apparently, that rarest of marriages, a union of artistic minds in daily collaboration, for now they conceived the idea of publishing their *Bibelot*. (It was on the plates in the *Bibelot* that he first became “Henri” Anthon.) She continued her office work, and so did he. He developed a talent for taking the bare elevation of an architect’s plans and producing a sketch for a building in a romantic color and atmosphere that no client could resist. He learned to etch for the *Bibelot* with a skill that has made him famous. And her verses, if they made no great sensation at the moment, stand now as “the only American woman’s work that ranks with Christina Rossetti’s.”

The critics who made the Anthons famous have variously interpreted their work in terms of their personalities. And the man who wrote the article on Anthon for *International Art* has a consistent theory of the artist’s growth in terms of his exper-

ience. It is all stuff. For instance, the critics have none of them guessed that Anthon's etchings in the *Bibelot* were not made to illustrate his wife's poems, but the poems were written to interpret the etchings. Anthon was never an illustrator. And his wife was never a purely original poet. She took her dreams from him.

A great many of her poems were love poems. Since she had no eyes for anyone but Anthon, it was taken for granted that she had written these poems to him. And since he was all eyes for every handsome woman that he saw, it was supposed that she was so silent because she was unhappily jealous. The secret behind the outward seeming of their lives was never suspected—not even by those of us who lived in the same house with them. Not until the whole thing had come to its tragic conclusion did Anthon disclose the truth, in a midnight confession in my rooms—a confession that was a pitiable outburst of self-justification in which he related all the details that I have been trying to reconstruct, more or less imaginatively, in this memoir of him.

## 9

It seems that her clergyman heard of her marriage and came to see her. He arrived while Anthon was alone in the studio, and Anthon received him with no suspicion of who he was, and chatted sociably over a plate that was in its final stages.

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"He wasn't dressed like a preacher," Anthon said, "and he didn't look like one. He looked more like a poet. I thought he was some young Shelley that wanted to contribute to the *Bibelot*. They were always hunting us up."

The moment that Mrs. Anthon entered, Anthon knew who the man was. She looked at him as if she saw a ghost. She did not seem to see Anthon there at all. The man said, "Grace!" And she asked, "What do you want?" And Anthon took his hat and fled. But the tone of that "Grace!" was the tone of misery seeing the door of salvation. And though her "What do you want?" closed the door and stood guard in front of it, Anthon escaped with the conviction that the door would be opened.

He expected it with relief. He was no longer in love with her—even in his own way—and this "young Shelley" was obviously "mad about her." Anthon protested that he was grateful for what she had done for him. He was convinced of that gratitude. But it was evident that gratitude had become a burden to him. I had long been aware that he resented his subordinate position as the supposed illustrator of her poems, and we had all known that he was more than interested in a smoldering lady novelist of great emotional intensity who came to their Thursday evenings at home.

He walked about the streets for an hour. When he returned to the studio, Grace was alone there.

He asked cheerfully, "Well, have you made it up?" And, of course, he asked it in a manner that showed how much he hoped that she *had* made it up.

She rose to her feet, as if she had been called upon to stand and take her sentence. "You expected me to!" she said.

"Well, for Heaven's sake," he cried, "what do you want? The man's mad about you and you're his wife! You won't let me be anything to you. We can't go on living this way. It isn't human. What do you expect?"

She had expected to make her own peculiar terms with life, and life would not accept them. In the person of Henri Anthon, it refused them angrily. It cried: "What do you expect? What do you expect?"

She got her hat and pinned it on, looking at him—or rather looking through him, as if she were unable to focus her eyes on him, frowning at him, wide eyed, with an uncertain and somewhat drunken stare. He kept asking: "What do you want to do? What do you want *me* to do?"

She shook her head. She went to the door, stiffly erect, but not very sure of her feet, apparently. She turned on the threshold, holding the door knob, as if she were going to speak to him, but she seemed to be unable to find him with her eyes and she tried to smile at the room in general. She achieved only a vague and rather maudlin distortion of the face. It was an expression that offended him. It was not

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beautiful. It had that sordid air of stupid reality which he hated in life.

She went out. He threshed around the room for a while, in a state of nervous exasperation. He tried to pack up his things, but he had nothing in which to pack them. Finally he hurried out to the street himself, walked aimlessly up and down, had his dinner in a restaurant, and returned to find the room still empty.

It was ten o'clock that night before he learned that she had been killed by a street car.

### 10

I do not offer any of this in criticism of Anthon. I feel that he was perhaps less to blame than she. I offer it in explanation of his art and his life.

It explains, for instance, why he published no more issues of the *Bibelot*, why he never illustrated any poems after her death, and refused all contracts for such work, and supported himself as an architectural draftsman. It explains why he never married; his relations with women continued to be merely jocular and predatory. This attitude of mind is the secret, I think, of his famous series of dry-point portraits of American femininity. His "Manhattan Nights," done at the same period, are another matter. They are his subconscious dreams made visible. The critics who try to reconcile his two manners are merely unaware that he had two minds.

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I lost sight of him when he went to Paris; but when I say that he went there like a man ascending bodily to Heaven, I mean it literally. His etchings of the Latin Quarter, of the Boulevards, and of Montmartre are pictures of the Promised Land. They have all the charm and beauty of a dream come true. They are the acme of his recognized achievement. And when war and the German invasion brought the terrible realities of life trampling into his earthly paradise, it was inevitably the end of everything for him. There was nothing left for him but to reject life on such terms—as there had been nothing left for Grace Aspinwall. It was suicide for a man of his age and physique to volunteer with his Latin Quarter friends, and he must have known that it was suicide.

The recent monograph of him, in *International Art*, showed as his only monument the wooden cross that marks his grave behind the French lines at Souchez. Evidently, he never told his Paris admirers about the Broadway Building. And that, I think, is the great criticism that life has to make of Anthon's art. He was ashamed of his one achievement that life accepted, on its own terms, proudly.

## II. BIG DAN REILLY

"He is a chip, a hand specimen, from the basement structure upon which American politics rest." ]  
—H. G. Wells, *The Future in America*.

### 1

CALL it "Headquarters." That is the way the politicians always refer to it, although it is a club. And imagine the politicians sitting in their puffy leather chairs around the reception room of the club that night, looking out on the street lights of Fifth Avenue, under oil portraits of their worthy predecessors, with brass cuspidors at their feet and brass match safes at their elbows. And imagine them raising a cloud of cigar smoke and a private mutter of political conversation, and an occasional quiet chuckle or an amused cough that represented laughter—a red-faced, boarse cough, with one eyebrow up and a fat hand over the mouth.

"Some of the best men in New York were there," Gatecliff boasted, in his account of what happened. "Some of the best. Millionaires. Heads of corporations."

He named names that it would be almost blasphemous to repeat in print.

At the far end of the room, the descending stairs made a railed landing like a balcony. Big Dan

Reilly was in the habit of coming down those stairs to hold his reception on the floor of the room, nodding and shaking hands and talking here and there freely, unless the matter was so confidential that it was necessary to withdraw to a corner table. And everybody always preserved an appearance of taking part in some social function that was genially informal, perhaps because Dan Reilly's power was outside the law and any consultation with him might well make itself look as innocent as possible.

This night he appeared, as expected, on the stairs; and they all rose as usual to greet him, still chatting, as if their rising were automatic and absent-minded, although it was neither. He descended as far as the landing and stood with his hands in his pockets, looking down sullenly at the men who turned to him in surprise as he waited.

He was dressed in black. Ordinarily he wore clothes that had an air of the race track and the betting ring. His big, good-natured, florid, round face looked heavy, sulky, lowering. He said, "I'll see *you*," and pointed insolently to a man below him.

Silence. Amazed silence.

He looked from face to face. "And I'll see *you*."

This man flushed, examined his cigar, put it between his biting teeth, and smoked with narrowed eyes, thoughtfully.

"And *you*."

A nervous clearing of some embarrassed throat.

"And *you*."

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He picked out a half dozen. "The rest o' you," he said, "can go home."

And they went home.

"We *went* home!" Gatecliff cried. "We *went* home! But"—and he marked his point with a spiteful forefinger—"it ended Big Dan as the boss of the organization. He never got a chance to speak that way to a group of gentlemen again."

### 2

From one point of view, the scene ought to be historic. It ought to be painted by the artist who did that museum picture of the French king's confessor, a barefooted monk, descending the grand staircase of the palace while all the silken courtiers bowed and smirked before him. (Dan Reilly, of the Bowery and the underworld, saying contemptuously to the nobility and ruling class of New York, "The rest o' you can go home!")

From another point of view, it is almost as scandalous as anything you will find in the secret memoirs of the French king's court. Gatecliff was there as the confidential adviser of a "traction magnate" who wished to procure for his company a monopoly right in certain city streets in order to operate a public utility; and the magnate was discreetly offering Big Dan and the other leaders of the organization some million dollars' worth of stock in the company, in return for the franchise. (It is impos-

sible to be more explicit without incurring a libel suit.) Moreover, all the other millionaires were there for similar reasons. Big Dan controlled the votes that made it necessary for the "best men" in New York to do business with him. It was illegal, corrupt, poisonous—but there it was. They had to do it, or somebody else would. They put a good face on it—a polite, conventional face—and Big Dan had hitherto looked at that face grimly, but with every appearance of being deceived by it. Now, incredibly, he had reached out his great, brutal hand and smacked it.

Why?

### 3

The answer is simple. It merely involves an explanation of Big Dan's character and his point of view, the story of his life, a picture of the moral and political background of his career, and an account of his relations with his mother, with Gatecliff, and with Gatecliff's sister Mary.

A man suddenly says a decisive word and makes a final gesture. Behind his impulse to say that word and make that gesture there is a lifetime of growth, experience, emotion. All his past—all that he has known and thought and seen and suffered up to that moment—all has a part in the motive of his action. And all his future comes influenced out of it.

Dan Reilly's moment on the balcony was such

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a moment. It is not impossible to find its vague beginnings in events that occurred even before his birth. For example:

Some weeks before he was born his father was killed in the “infamous draft riots” of the summer of 1863. His father was the Hugh Reilly, the “Red” Reilly, who led the riots in his district because of the clause in the Conscription Act by which a man could buy exemption for three hundred dollars. Red Reilly could not understand why only the poor in pocket should be forced to die for their country. He died learning it. He was in arrears with his rent at the time—as he was at all times—and the landlord evicted the widow of the traitor, in a burst of patriotism, as soon as he heard what had happened to Reilly.

Red Reilly’s unborn son heard it later. He heard it as the story of his father’s revolt against those governing classes who had passed a draft law providing for their own exemption. And I believe it is not too far fetched to see him as Red Reilly’s son unconsciously carrying on his father’s quarrel, when he stood on the stairs at Headquarters and said to later beneficiaries of legislative privilege, “The rest o’ you can go home.”

And whether that is far fetched or not, this much is certain: the circumstances of his birth strongly determined the psychology of his great dramatic moment.

With his mother evicted as the widow of a de-

linquent traitor, he might have been born in the gutter if she had not been given shelter by a woman more unfortunate even than she. Consequently, he was born "amid the most depraved surroundings"—in a tenement that stood in the back yard of a Grove Street house that was itself sufficiently depraved, although it kept up an appearance of red-brick respectability with a rare old Colonial door and a notable fanlight.

The shack behind it was a clapboarded wooden building that had been a wagon factory, and then a livery stable, before it became unfit for the use of valuable animals. It was occupied by a number of unpitied outcasts who lived there, practically rent free, by the grace of the woman who kept the Grove Street house. There were no chimneys in the building. Stovepipes protruded through some of the broken window panes; but there was no stove in the room in which the future ruler of New York was born; its regular occupant kept herself warm with alcohol. It was a room that had been part of the paint shop of the wagon factory, and in one corner the drip of innumerable cart wheels had deposited a ridge, a hummock, a rounded stalagmite, of hardened paint. The head of Mrs. Reilly's mattress took advantage of that mound to make a pillow.

Dan was born on a cool August evening, after a day's rain, by the light of a blessed candle that had been borrowed from a neighbor. He was a twelve-

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pound baby, as lusty as a young porker, and his arrival was as much an event as if he had been born in a convent. The thwarted maternal instincts of his neighbors received him with gratified excitement. They carried him up and down stairs wrapped in an old white-silk petticoat, exhibiting him from room to room. As a man-child, he had the rank of a young heir among his slaves.

"There y' are!" as one of them said, admiringly. "Many's the gurl 'll break her heart fer *you*, yuh little Turk!"

The occupants of the Grove Street house lavished gifts on him and invalid comforts on his mother. For two mouths they cared for her while she was too ill to help herself. They brought her sewing to do when she grew strong enough to resent charity. She said good-by to them regretfully when she was well enough to move to more comfortable surroundings. And she parted from them with a gratitude that she never forgot or allowed her son to forget.

Once when the police were making a vice crusade ostentatiously, she told him the story of his birth and said, "Danny, if y' iver do anything to make life harder fer the likes o' *thim*, yeh're no son o' mine."

He did a great deal to make life harder for the likes of them, as any ruler makes life harder for his subjects; there were hundreds of them in his home district, and they had to pay his henchmen for the protection they received. But he protected them

from other exploitation and from the sort of hardship and persecution that his mother besought him to spare them. "The king of the underworld," "his saloons their known resorts," he accepted them on their own terms as part of his constituency. He represented them in politics as well as he represented anybody. And he was still representing them when he stood on the balcony at Headquarters and looked down on those men who, he knew, despised him secretly as much as they despised his constituents.

### 4

Most determinative of all, he stood there as his mother's son.

When she left the Grove Street tenement she carried him to a room in Hudson Street, and settled down to do scrubbing and washing and sewing to support him. She was a frail young woman, from the north of Ireland, thrifty and ambitious. She had married Red Reilly against everyone's advice but his, and she had emigrated to America with him to escape the commiseration of the prejudiced. She was without relatives in New York, and almost without friends. Alone, in silence, like a prisoner digging a tunnel secretly, she set to work to escape from poverty.

And she failed because of a characteristic which, in Big Dan Reilly, made his political fortune. She was insanely charitable. Anyone who asked her

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for help could have it from her. She would give away her money, her food, her clothes, her bedding. It was as if, having suffered the extreme of shipwreck and been rescued by the charity of the most needy, she was unable thereafter to refuse anyone a share in whatever little she had. She was never able to get ahead. There was never anything for to-morrow in her purse or her larder. And it was this quality in Big Dan that afterward made it possible for him to hold his followers together by what the newspapers called "the cohesive power of public plunder." More of that later.

By the time he was six years old he was selling newspapers and blacking shoes, in order to help her. But only after school hours. She made him go to school faithfully. And even as a shoeblack he showed some organizing ability, for he got the monopoly right to shine the shoes of the policemen in the station house of his precinct, and he did the work so well that he obtained the same work in another precinct and took an assistant. He sold newspapers in City Hall Park long enough to make friends in a press room, where he took the job of helping to carry papers from the presses to the delivery carts, at a salary of a dollar and a half a week.

"When I got to be ten years old," he said once, in a speech on the Bowery, "I got a teacher in school to let me go at two o'clock, an' then I was able to serve that newspaper all to myself. I passed the grammer department o' my school, an' I was one

o' seven boys to go to the Free Academy, in Twenty-third Street, I think it was. Free as it was, it wasn't free enough for me to go there. I had to go an' commence the struggle o' life."

And there again, I think, spoke the son of Red Reilly, in revolt against the class that could afford leisure for education, and acutely conscious of the fact that their organs of publicity spoke of him as having "the manners and speech of the typical 'tough.'"

However, to get down to Gatecliff and his sister and the immediate personal motives behind that scene at Headquarters—

### 5

Big Dan, as a boy, was so large for his age that he arrived at long pants a year earlier than the others of his generation; and this made him inevitably notable among his contemporaries. He was handy with his fists, as they all were, and his size gave him a natural superiority in street fighting, which was their chief recreation. He was kindly and good-natured, so that he did not tyrannize over his companions, but fought the older bullies who would have tyrannized over them. It was so that he first championed young Buttony Gatecliff against oppression, and won the devotion of Buttony's sister.

They called him "Buttony" because he wore his knickerbockers buttoned to his roundabout. He

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was the timid son of a conciliatory grocer, Amos Gatecliff, who kept a shop on Hudson street, and he was persecuted by all the little bruisers of the neighborhood, who had learned that they could blackmail him for sweets from his father's shelves by waylaying him on the streets and torturing him with threats of violence unless he brought them tribute. His life had become a continual terror. He had either to steal at home or be hunted like defenseless virtue abroad. His only protector was his sister Mary, who escorted him whenever she could.

She was escorting him home from school one winter afternoon when he was set upon by three of his tormentors. One held her, and the others took Buttony and rubbed his face in the snow and crammed it down his collar and filled his mittens with it and stifled his outcries while they exacted promises of future bribes. Fate brought Danny Reilly on the scene. Mary Gatecliff knew him by sight; she had seen him in her father's shop buying an occasional twist of "orange pekoe" as a present for his mother. She cried out to him.

In an instant he was sprawling on the pavement, with the largest bully under him and the other two on his back. She caught Buttony to her and prevented him from running away while she stood, loyal but terrified into helplessness, watching Big Dan do battle for her. That battle was a primitive affair, bloody and furious. It was not fought according to any Queensberry rules. Dan terrified one opponent

into flight by trying to bite the nose off him. He kicked another in the kneecap and all but broke his leg. The third did not wait his turn. He popped into a basement like a rat into its hole, and escaped by some back exit.

Dan picked up his cap, grinning, brushed the snow off himself, and asked her, "Which way 're yuh goin'?"

As they went she confided all Buttony's troubles to him, and he listened with a touch of that social superiority which he had always felt for the Gate-cliffs. They were shopkeepers. They were ingratiatingly polite to customers. They were English, and they had English traditions of class subservience which no young Irishman of Dan's temperament could understand. He walked beside her like a sworded D'Artagnan beside the wife of Bonacieux, the mercer of *The Three Musketeers*.

He said to her at parting, "If any o' them kids ever picks on Buttony again, you come an' tell me."

She was a pale and intense little hero worshiper with black hair and large dark eyes. She raised those eyes to him in a most submissive admiration. "Thanks," she murmured, from her heart.

Thereafter Buttony was safe under Dan's protection and the protection of his gang. The word was passed around that Mary was Dan's "girl" and that any boy who gave Buttony any cause to complain of him might as well prepare to meet his day of judgment.

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The gang was merely a group of a dozen boys who played and fought together as boys of a neighborhood always do. They called themselves the Hylos, for no reason that anyone remembers. Dan had found a clubroom for them in a vacant coal cellar; he had found it by merely breaking in a cellar door. They held nightly meetings there, by candlelight, with the cellar windows covered, playing cards, shooting craps, and feasting on apples, bread, bologna, pails of jam, bottles of catsup, tins of salmon or whatever else they had been able to gather during the evening. And they gathered these things as boys rob orchards, in an adventurous spirit of young deviltry.

One of them was a butcher's son, and it was his duty to steal his father's sausage. He afterward became the president of a packing company and he always spoke of Big Dan with real affection. Another was the son of a baker, and he filched rolls and cakes. The rest went in twos and threes to make organized raids on push-cart peddlers and the goods displayed in front of food shops. Big Dan laid out the tactics of their raids and attended to the police. He would walk up to the officer on the beat and engage him in conversation. "Perty good shine, eh?" he might say, pointing to his patron's shoes, boyish and innocent, with no sign of shrewdness in his big smile. And while the officer was being "jollied" the other Hylos would grab their loct and run. Their organized mischief annoyed the precinct for a

whole winter before the police discovered that their station shoebblack was the leader of the gang—even though he once saved his confederates by accidentally tripping up an officer when the pursuit broke out prematurely.

They would occasionally “roll a rummy”; that is to say, if they met a drunken man in a quiet spot they would relieve him of any money that he had, on the pragmatic theory that they might as well have it as the first crook he met. One or two of them snatched purses, although this was forbidden by their leader except in cases where it was evident that the owner of the purse could well afford to lose it. They took part in election campaigns, pestering the cart-tail orators of the opposing party, pelting the illuminated wagons that carried “transparencies” through the streets, marching uninvited in torchlight processions, and raiding the bonfires on election nights to obtain fuel for their own rejoicings. In all these undertakings they acted like a “gang of young ruffians.” But they had no idea that they were a gang of young ruffians. They thought they were merely a mutual amusement club for social recreation and innocent adventure.

They had no more idea that their street activities were criminal than they had that their pranks in the parish church were impious. Several of them, including Big Dan, were altar boys and acolytes. They relieved the tedium of religious services by carrying their candles so as to drip hot grease on the

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heads of the boys in front of them, by putting bent pins on sanctuary benches and tying knots in the arms of soutanes. They did these things while carefully maintaining the devout expressions of young cherubs in a heavenly choir, and their victims kept the same pious faces while they retaliated and defended themselves. No boy thought of appealing to the priests for protection any more than he would have thought of running to the police for aid in a street fight; it was against the code and social usage. And if the priests knew what was going on behind their backs, they ignored it—as the police usually did.

Buttony came into the Hylos under Dan's wing, and he was endured there for Dan's sake, but with no enthusiasm. The others did not like him. Smoking made him sick. He had no natural gift for profanity and he was unpleasantly ingratiating and self-conscious in its use. He was not of their religion, which made him an outlander. He stole with a tremblingly defiant air, as if he expected to be struck by lightning. And, of course, it was he who was caught.

He was arrested one night for trying to snatch a purse in emulation of a more expert associate. He was taken to the station house and locked up. As soon as Big Dan heard of it he went to the station on the general pretext of his interest in police boots, and he was caught trying to pick the lock of Buttony's cell. He was locked up, himself. But-

tony, despairing of rescue, confessed the secrets of the Hylo gang to the police captain. Plain clothes men gathered in the other boys. By midnight all the Hylos were behind bars, and the station house was besieged by their parents, their relatives, and their friends, all of whom were eloquent with the conviction of their own respectability and the prisoners' innocence.

The captain of the precinct at the time was that Joe Mehlin who afterward became Superintendent of Police and a power in opposition to Big Dan—a pompadoured, red-haired disciplinarian with light-blue eyes that looked peculiarly cold in the setting of his sandy complexion. He was resolved to be revenged on the Hylos for the trouble they had given him. He was especially set on punishing Big Dan because he had found it impossible to break the boy down, to make him penitent, to make him cower.

“You got us all wrong, Cap,” Dan kept saying, cheerfully unawed. “We ain’t crooks—none of us. It’s a frame-up on the kid. He’s no dip. An’ he’s so scared he don’t know what he’s talkin’ about. He’d say anythin’.”

And the captain would reply: “All right, Reilly. Then I’ll send you all up. You can’t make a fool o’ me. You’ll get five years fer this.”

The other boys took their tone from Dan. His attempt to rescue Buttony had been the final act of daring that had made a melodramatic hero of him.

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They stood behind him solidly. It was all or none. And by morning the accumulated political influence of the whole neighborhood, its Assemblyman, its priests, and its Senator was settling down in a menacing pressure on the police captain.

He stood out so long that his final collapse was all the more humiliating to him, and he consoled himself by giving Big Dan a brutal measure of the third degree before he released the boy.

"Listen here, Cap," Reilly said, when he had reached the safety of the station-house door, "I'll get yuh fer this some day, an' I'll get yuh good."

Of course, he kept his promise. Among the people whom he represents it is a point of honor to avenge an injury as faithfully as to reward a friend. It is the whole duty of a moral life to be "no quitter" and "no ingrate."

And poor Buttony was forever damned in the eyes of the district by being both a quitter and an ingrate. He had confessed, and he had betrayed his friends. He tried to regain his standing in the world by recanting his confession everywhere. He told his parents that it was false, that he had been frightened into it. And Dan assisted him, at home, by assuring Mary Gatecliff that they were all innocent, particularly Buttony. She believed him; she accepted his attempt to rescue her brother as a deed of romantic faithfulness that had been done for her as much as for Buttony; and she rewarded Dan by letting him kiss her.

Her parents were less easily convinced. They saved Buttony from immediate purgatory at the hands of the Hylos by moving uptown to take him away from evil associates. Big Dan, after a touching farewell to Mary, remained to enjoy his laurels.

To tell the truth, he was relieved to have her go. She was older than he, and he had begun to find her too intense and humorless in her fixed idea of his devotion to her. He had not the temperament needed to make a humble cavalier. He forgot her, for the time.

Buttony had learned that you cannot break the law without risking punishment. Big Dan had learned that you can escape punishment if you have influence enough to control the police. Buttony went to the Free Academy to be educated in the ethics of respectability; he studied law at Columbia; he became an agent of the Citizens' League; and he turned against his memories of his boyhood escapades with all the fervor of a convert repenting of his sins. Big Dan continued to take his education from the streets.

### 6

And here we approach the real heart of his mystery. When the Hylos were forced to dissolve, by the continued intrusion of the police, Dan and his older followers were absorbed by the James Phelan Athletic Association—which was athletic in the way that the Y.M.C.A. is athletic, and political as the

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Y.M.C.A. is religious. Its two glories were Jimmy Phelan, the district leader, and Kid McCann, the champion lightweight. Its membership included the politicians, the ward heelers, the pugilists, the gamblers, the professional crooks, the young sports, the political aspirants, and all the doubtful light and leading of the district. In its rooms and on the streets, after working hours, Big Dan became familiar with every form of common vice. Yet he practiced none of them. Why?

He had promised his mother that he would not use either tobacco or alcohol until he was twenty-one, but why did he keep the promise? He had directed the Hylos in all their boyish raids and depredations, but why did he never join in their petty thieving? The young bloods of the Phelan Association put him in the way of becoming a prize fighter and trained him for the ring. Why did he never take to that ambition? Why did he continue working in the press room on Park Row until he was elected Assemblyman from his district? What was the secret of his strength of will that carried him to one ambition and not to another, that kept him above weaknesses which he never seemed to condemn, that made him the king of the underworld—as it had made him the leader of the Hylos—but preserved him from being, in the professional sense of the word, a “crook”?

Well, Big Dan, even as a child, had a bodily superiority that made him admired and compli-

mented, and I believe it was this first sense of physical importance that formed the backbone of his personality. His early leadership among his companions must have confirmed his innate conviction of natural eminence. Certainly he developed a sort of instinct of aristocracy that showed in his mother, too, in her inordinate almsgiving. As the head of the Hylos, he refrained from the thieving as the foreman of a work gang refrains from work. When Buttony was arrested and Dan went to release him, it was from an obvious impulse of *noblesse oblige*. His promise that he would not smoke or drink he kept, as a boy, because he was fond of his mother; and he kept it, as he grew older, because his habits of abstinence were habits of which he became proud, since they were *his* habits, and different from the prevailing habits around him. Moreover, in his experience of life, drunkenness was a form of weakness of which the predatory took advantage—as the Hylos rolled a rummy—and all those in his circle who pandered to vice exploited similar weaknesses. Big Dan had no intention of allowing himself to be exploited, and some obscure sense of responsibility for the weak prevented him from becoming an exploiter of them. He accepted training as a pugilist until he was expert enough to make anyone respect his blows, but he went no farther; he balked at being the fighting cock of a group of prize-ring promoters. He became one of the stalwarts who did the “strong-arm” work about

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the polls, prevented members of the opposing party from casting their votes, and supplied the consequent vacancy with a loyal impersonator when a rival voter had been carried home. Among his people, this sort of activity is regarded as good exercise for a growing lad, and Big Dan took plenty of it. But he did not himself impersonate; he was too conspicuous, physically. When he became ward captain he did not, himself, buy votes; he received the money and disbursed it to his craftier lieutenants. And his sense of superiority and of responsibility slowly promoted him to a leadership and an authority which his amiable good nature kept beneficent and popular.

His mother aided him throughout. Her pride in him was colossal; she may have helped to lay the foundations of his nature with that pride. She trusted him and leaned on him even in his school days; and it may have been this that made him responsible. She was a wise judge of character; she knew the affairs of the whole neighborhood; and her gossip was an education to him. When she gave anything out of her charity, she always said, "This is from Danny, now," and Danny got the credit of it. When he became captain of his ward, she acted as his chief of staff and busied herself all day "lookin' to his finces," as she called it, while he was away at his work. She reported to him at supper, while he ate her cooking, and he would say, grinning: "If you ain't the crafty one! Would yuh

like to run fer the Presidency? Tip me the wink an' I'll speak to Phelan."

"You an' yer Phelan," she would reply. "I c'u'd get it from *him* quicker than yeh c'u'd, yerself."

"That's true enough, y' ol' ward heeler," he would admit. And it was.

Their intercourse was conducted in this disrespectful tone of rough banter that served to disguise the shamefacedness of an idolatrous love.

She had been prematurely gray as a young woman. Now she was white haired. Dan called her "Granny" to tease her, and she had become "Granny" affectionately to the whole ward. They came to her for every sort of advice and assistance. They came to her with their quarrels, and she listened to both sides and sympathized with both, but joined neither. It was her private boast that she had never had a quarrel in her life. She had an inexhaustible tolerance, and I do not believe she ever passed an adverse moral judgment on anybody who was not rich. "Poor people has to make a livin'," she would say, in forgiveness of all her neighbors' notorious delinquencies; and yet she was a devout churchgoer and prayed for Danny morning, noon, and night.

She was popular with the mothers, who are the real heads of the families in the tenements. The men are too often stupefied by hard labor and alcoholic recreation. They are less ambitious than their wives; they have a weaker sense of responsi-

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bility to their children; they do not endure poverty so hardily; they die younger. "Granny" Reilly was the confidante and adviser, the visiting nurse and Lady Bountiful, of every mother, wife, and widow in the neighborhood; and they were all "for her" and for her son. It was her influence as much as anything that elected him to the legislature.

That happened in 1887, when he was twenty-four years old. And one of the first results of it was to bring Mary Gatecliff back into his life. She wrote, congratulating him on his election, formally. He went to call on her, because he was an awkward letter writer and he had self-confidence enough to go anywhere. He did not hesitate even when he found the Gatecliffs living on West Twenty-third Street in one of the houses of London Terrace that still maintained the tradition of the row's earlier magnificence.

Gatecliff had become a wholesale grocer, with a string of retail shops; his wife had developed formal manners and a complete loss of hearing; Buttony had married a daughter of money and moved still farther uptown; and Mary Gatecliff was not at all the youngster who had kissed Dan good-by in the hallway on Hudson street. She had been to a finishing school. She was meditatively quiet, a solitary reader, silent and observant. It seemed impossible

that she could ever have any but a feeling of kindly superiority for Big Dan. She probably thought that she had written to him out of such a feeling.

But Dan had once roused in her a tumultuous emotion, and he was the only man who had. That, I think, is the explanation of the affair that followed —one of those mysterious love affairs that are the despair of parents and the scandal of friends. Her intelligence had been educated out of all sympathy with him, but there was something else in her that had not. Her emotions responded to their old stimulus at sight of him, and she was struck with a flush and thrill that startled her. His voice shook her; she did not know why. He was aware of it. He had a compelling tone of confident familiarity, and he took her hand, smiling at her. He called her “Mary” cheerfully, and talked to her about her former neighbors and old times, with laughter. He seemed genuinely big hearted, human, rough, and winning. He was humorous about himself and his mother and his political “spiels” and his career. “She’s so pop’lar,” he said, “that they’ve elected me. I tell her she’ll have to gi’ me her proxy so’s I c’n vote.” And while Mary Gatecliff was critical of his slurred speech and his “Bowery mannerisms,” she forgave them because, in the back of her mind, she was thinking that they could be easily corrected.

She parted from him with a girlish friendliness of manner that would have seemed impossible to her a few hours earlier. She hurried to bed and

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then lay awake, excited, far into the night, with her reason apparently cool about him, but her emotions deeply stirred.

And it was not many days before her reason took the tone of her emotion. She believed that Abraham Lincoln might have been such a young politician as Dan if Lincoln had been less melancholy. Dan was of the people, uneducated, a poor boy; but she knew that most of the leaders of the nation had been that. She began to feel that what he most needed was a friend with high ideals and the culture of a better class to influence and guide him.

She wrote him again, sending him a book of which she had spoken to him. Her father saw him on his second visit, but her father's business had given him a great respect for the financial virtue of political influence, and he was pleasant to the young Assemblyman. Her mother saw him; but her mother, being deaf, talked unceasingly to cover her infirmity. She seemed rather more than pleasant. Dan was used to having people pleasant to him; it did not impress him. Mary talked to him of his plans and his ambitions, with an encouraging interest. He was not unused to young feminine interest, either. He jollied her as he jollied his mother; and because he was leaving for Albany next day he put his arm around her at parting, and kissed her good-by as he might have kissed his mother.

She wrote him in Albany, a letter that accepted her surrender to his caress as if it had been the last

surrender of love. He was deeply moved by it. It was the sort of letter that only an intense and idealistic girl can write when all her barriers are broken down. Dan replied clumsily, jocularly, but in terms which he had never before been able to use to anyone but his mother.

8

He arrived at the legislature like a fraternity athlete entering a college where friends have preceded him. It was a legislature that was acclaimed by the newspapers of the day the "most corrupt, discreditable, unprincipled, and venal that ever assembled in the capital of any civilized community." Big Dan and his friends were as little worried by that criticism as if they were the class of '87 being scolded by their teachers. He attended committee meetings and debates as a college "sport" attends lectures. He had nothing but good-natured contempt for Buttony Gatecliff—now Harold A. Gatecliff, agent of the Citizens' League—whom he found lobbying in support of various reform measures. In Dan's eyes Gatecliff had become a studious and spectacled prig, and after one unpleasant interview they agreed to go their separate ways. It never occurred to Dan that Buttony might be dangerous. And he did not mention Mary to him. That, he thought, was no affair of Buttony's.

'The legislators were "doing business on a basis

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of from five dollars upward." Some of the up-state members were quoted at one hundred dollars each. Big Dan organized a "union to maintain prices" among the New York and Brooklyn members, and they got as high as five hundred dollars each for their votes. They helped to pass a bill to free insurance companies from back taxes of \$700,000 and future taxes of \$200,000 a year. Big Dan voted for it gayly. He voted to expend a million and a half for patent ballot boxes, to the sole profit of the firm that made them and the members who voted for them. For his constituency he obtained a free public bath and permission for newspaper vendors to erect news stands "within the stoop line" on New York City streets. He helped to introduce a number of "strike bills"—which are bills threatening to penalize corporations that are rich enough and timid enough to pay for immunity. He made his mark as a humorist at committee meetings. His union to maintain prices became known as "the Black Horse Cavalry," and he led it as ably as he had led the Hylos. He had more money than his mother could give away; he bought her an old red-brick house in the Greenwich Village quarter; and he financed his first saloon, with one of his boyhood friends as its proprietor. His political influence protected it from the police. Altogether, his first year in the legislature was happy and profitable in a boyish and innocent sort of way—"innocent" in *his* eyes, that is.

His affair with Mary Gatecliff ran along less happily for her than for him, since she found herself committed to a man who remained obviously more free than she. His affection had no vows. It did not even find words for itself. And it masked its sincerity in boyish grins and clumsy playfulness. She trembled when he kissed her, suffocated by the beating of her heart; and then she wept, when he was gone, because she could neither resist him nor apparently make him respect the weakness that yielded to him. She denied her feeling for him to her father. She could not, in self-respect, admit the humiliating terms of it. "We're just friends," she said.

Love, to her, was something abstract and transcendental, of the nature of a religion, exacting in its worship and rather solemn. To Dan it was a merely human relation. He took her affection as he took his mother's. He repaid it—as he repaid his mother's—with rough kindness when he was with her and devoted thoughts when he was away. And he left the unconsidered future to develop itself and their relations, sure of himself and his success.

### 9

So he came to the crisis and the turning point in his career. Imagine him a burly twenty-six, rubicund and round-faced, well dressed, prosperous, known to everybody in his district and liked by them all. His passage down his native street was a tri-

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umphal progress. The policeman on the beat saluted him. The loafers on the saloon corners stopped him to borrow money. The street children pointed him out and followed him. The shopkeepers shook hands with him. He was buttonholed and solicited by constituents and office seekers, and he released himself with a broad smile and a pat on the shoulder and such promises as he knew he could keep. He smiled at the girls, with his hat on the back of his head. He touched the brim of it with a wave of the hand when their mothers greeted him. He joked with the priest. A universal favorite, as kindly as a prince who wishes to be popular, he walked with the sun on his face and a prosperous future before him. And he never looked back at the past that followed him—an invisible figure, which he thought nobody saw, because he never looked at it himself—until suddenly that figure stepped up beside him, took his arm firmly, and walked him into a future that was a sinister counterfeit of all he had expected.

There was to be a centennial celebration in New York City in 1889, and in April of that year a bill was introduced at Albany to give the city police the power to arrest suspected criminals at sight, so as to protect the centennial crowds from pickpockets and street walkers and hold-up men. Big Dan opposed the bill on the legitimate grounds that no man or woman should be arrested unless upon specific charges. He fought the bill in committee.

He fought it on the floor of the house. He rallied his Black Horse Cavalry against it, traded influence to defeat it, and "swapped" votes.

Unfortunately, Inspector Mehlin was behind the bill, and so was the Citizens' League. Mehlin called in the newspaper men and gave them an interview in which he described Big Dan as "the associate of thieves and criminals," "a political crook, prize fighter, and strong-arm man," "opposed to the bill because all the criminals were his friends and if the bill went through it would hurt his saloon business." And the secretary of the Citizens' League followed with a sketch of Big Dan's life, supplied by Gatecliff: "Born amid the most depraved surroundings . . . the leader of a gang of young ruffians known to the police as the Hylo gang . . . his manners and speech those of the typical 'tough' . . . the companion of thieves and prostitutes . . . his saloons their known resorts . . . perhaps the most dangerous man that New York City ever sent to Albany . . . the recognized leader of that group of piratical Assemblymen known as 'the Black Horse Cavalry' . . . the king of the underworld . . . a political brigand holding his followers together by the cohesive power of public plunder," etc., etc.

Big Dan woke next morning to find himself infamous. In vain he denied the statements on the floor of the house. He was not convincing. He would not desert his friends, Barney This and Fitzey That, thieves and burglars, whom Mehlin had

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named. He admitted that he knew them, but denied that his friendship was guilty. He could not deny his leadership of the Black Horse. Not to their faces. He spoke lamely and confusedly. He defeated the bill, but he did not clear himself. He could not. Mehlins had made too picturesque and colorful a figure of him. The Albany correspondents took it up. The editorial writers enlarged on it. And Dan's place in the social system was forever fixed.

He did not realize it. It was years before he realized it.

Mary Gatecliff saw her brother, learned the truth, about the Hylos and about the legislature, and wrote to Dan: "It is terrible. There is nothing I can say. Do not come again. I could not trust myself to speak to you." And when he called she would not see him; and when he wrote she did not answer.

That cut him to the vitals. He could not picture any circumstances in which he would have turned his back on Mary before her enemies. It put her in a class with her brother; they had "a yellow streak."

Dan's criminal associates had not. They rallied to him. They elected him vice-president of the Phelan Association, and made speeches to him as "the man who never went back on a friend." The underworld had found a champion; they crowded to his saloon. The neighbors came to assure his

mother that whatever the lying police and the newspapers might say, they knew that Danny was a good boy. Most significant of all, Cass Harley came.

And with Cass Harley, Dan's future took him by the arm. Harley was then a corporation lawyer, lobbyist, and "fixer." The Black Horse Cavalry had been worrying him and his clients. He came to make peace. He came to offer Dan an alliance with the financial powers upon whom, as a piratical Assemblyman, Dan had been preying.

"We need a leader in the legislature, Dan," he said. "The boys won't follow Cassidy. You and your friends had us blocked a half dozen times last session, and it's going to be worse now. We need you and we can take care of you."

Dan asked, only, "Can you get Mehlin fer me?"

"Yes," Harley promised, "we can get Mehlin. And we can stop most of this newspaper stuff."

"I don't care about the papers," Dan said. "They can't hurt me down here. But I want Mehlin's scalp. He lied about me."

"We all know that," Harley assured him, although he was there because he believed what Mehlin had said. "Tell me, can we help your organization in any way? Need any campaign contributions?"

"I'll see y' about that later." Dan rose heavily, to end the interview. "Get Mehlin first."

Harley nodded. "It may take me a little time. I'll begin right away."

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He "got" Mehlin. He got him so painfully that Mehlin came to Dan, in an attempt to save himself, and apologized and begged for his place. That simply made him "a quitter." Dan went down into his change pocket and drew out some silver.

"Mehlin," he said, "you once ga' me a quarter more'n I'd earned blackin' boots. It was the only decent thing y' ever did. Take it, an' get out before I throw y' out. We're quits."

Here was Reilly's first conspicuous public display of power. It marked him as an autocrat to the underworld. It brought a thousand willing agents to his service. And with these adherents at one end of the social system and Cass Harley and his clients at the other, he was supported by a combination of influence that was invincible. He was made the political boss of his district. He was no longer "Big Dan"; he was "the Big One." When Jiminy Phelan died, the Phelan Association became the Dan Reilly Association, with Granny Reilly as the empress dowager behind the throne. Under her direction as much as Dan's, it developed into a political association for the distribution of discriminating alms. An official chaplain attended marriages, christenings, and funerals to leave flowers "from Big Dan." A dispossess man went to court every morning for lists of evicted tenants and gave them aid. A recognized place finder occupied himself getting work for voters from every business man and corporation in New York

that could be reached by the Big One; and with Cass Harley to assist, there were few that could not be reached. But, unlike any of his predecessors in such a situation, Reilly did not sell out to the powers whom Harley served. He did not even lose himself among the higher-ups. He stuck to his district. He spoke of sacred Headquarters as "the dead man's rest," and kept away from it. He poured great sums of money through the Dan Reilly Association into the needy purses of his constituents, and took from them, in return, their votes. Thanks to his mother, he had made, unconsciously, an important discovery in the science of democratic government—a discovery that put him at last on the balcony at Headquarters. It was this:

Among business men, farmers, manufacturers, and such, a voter marks his ballot in support of the party that gives him either a policy or a tariff to protect his livelihood. But there are no farmers or manufacturers or accumulations of invested capital among the tenement dwellers. When those people vote for the party that assures their livelihood, they vote for the party that gives them jobs. Big Dan's political machine became an organization that gave the workingman, the poor, the unemployed, and the petty criminal work or money or protection in exchange for their votes. Reilly became the Hanna of his party, locally.

He was soon dictating to Cass Harley; and Harley, angered, assisted the newspapers and the

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Citizens' League in an attempt to destroy him. They made the Big One a social outlaw, as picturesque as Robin Hood; but he polled an overwhelming vote in his district, dictated terms to Harley's clients, and ended Harley's political career. Then he reached for the principal backers of the Citizens' League and forced them to drop Gatecliff, who as its secretary, had directed the publicity against him. He even fought the party Boss and defeated him in a characteristic activity.

The Boss was interested in horse breeding and racing; his henchmen introduced a bill at Albany to suppress pool rooms because pool rooms hurt the race tracks by making it unnecessary to go to the races in order to bet; and Reilly, leading the pool room forces, proposed another bill making all betting illegal, whether on the tracks or in the pool rooms. The reformers flocked to Reilly's support. The Boss, in order to get Big Dan to withdraw his bill, had to withdraw his own. He never forgave Big Dan and was never asked to. "What do I care fer Headquarters," Reilly laughed. "I can carry my distric' whether I'm in th' organization er not." He carried it when a reform wave engulfed the party in every other district of the city, and it was he who served notice on the Boss that his abdication was expected as a consequence of that defeat.

He was now at the point where he should have been able to assume the crown of his career. And he could not touch it. Mehlin and Gatecliff and

Cass Harley and the Citizens' League had done their work too well. The rival leaders at Headquarters could not oppose his power, but they did not conceal from him the obvious fact that to put a man of his reputation on the party throne would mean the public ruin of the party. The reform wave was still running high.

"Better fake up a stool pigeon, Dan," they advised him, "an' work behind him till this blows over. We know it ain't true, what they say of yuh. But the public don't know it."

In the secret silences of his thought he blamed it all on Gatecliff, and whatever business or undertaking Gatecliff entered on he contrived to blight it, mysteriously. Mary Gatecliff tried to see him. She wrote to ask for an interview. He did not answer. She persisted with a letter begging him not to ruin her brother. He muttered, "What do you two think yuh've done to me?" and threw the letter in the waste basket.

When Mary married the head of the traction company, he watched for Buttony to appear in the company's affairs; and when Gatecliff showed as a confidential legal adviser to the president of the concern, Dan set a new trap in the shape of a traction franchise with which he intended to "gold brick" them. Gatecliff, persecuted as he had been in his youth, was willing again to pay tribute. He undertook negotiations with Headquarters, and Dan handed him over to a lieutenant.

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The price was agreed upon, but the company offered stock, and Dan would not move except for half the amount in ready money paid in advance. He planned to accept that bribe and then secretly to manipulate the legislature to refuse the franchise. The traction heads had to take his word as his bond. He had never broken his word in the past, and everybody knew it.

10

It was toward the end of these negotiations that he came to his dramatic moment on the Headquarters stairs.

He came there in black because he had been to the funeral of his mother. He came there feeling suddenly empty, bitter, resentful—empty of all ambition to remain in control at Headquarters, now that his mother was no longer alive to be proud of his power; bitter because of the public obloquy under which both he and his mother had suffered; and resentful toward those best men of the community who dreaded him, despised him, and waited on him. As he had walked down the aisle of the church, behind his mother's coffin, he had seen Mary Gatecliff in a pew, and she had looked at him with sympathy, with pity, with a pleading reproach. He had said to himself, "Her husband made her come, to jolly me along." But he knew better. Her eyes were the strained eyes of a victim of disillusion, looking at a fellow sufferer in unhappiness,

and mutely asking him, in the face of death, why they had so maimed each other's lives.

The look accused him and accused herself. It forgave him and asked forgiveness. And with that look in his memory he paused on the railed landing of the stairs and saw her brother and her husband below him, waiting hopefully for the word from him that would spring the fall of his trap. He despised them. He was ashamed of himself and of them. He wanted to insult them contemptuously while he saved them. And he wanted to slap their whole respected world in the face. And he slapped it. "The rest o' yuh can go home."

## 11

It was his last official act at Headquarters. "I'm sick," he told the man who was to succeed him. "An' I'm through here. That deal with Gatecliff and his bunch, that's off. If anyone wants to see me, tell 'em to go to hell."

He retired to one of his Bowery lairs and took to his bed. The painted woman who was nursing him persuaded him to drink some hot toddy, to put him to sleep. It went to his head and he talked of his mother.

"I had a funny feelin' up there at the cemet'ry," he said. "They buried her on the side of a hill. An' the sun was shinin'. An' they dug the grave like a box, cuttin' it down straight on the sides an'

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makin' the corners square, *you* know, like a box. An' the shell just fitted into it like it was made fer it. An' there was somethin' about the look o' that grave, an' the way it was made, that all of a sudden made me feel contented about havin' her in it—somethin', *you* know, consolin.' An' when they lowered her into it the shell fitted so tight that the air came up slow, an' when she settled down in it it made a sort o' sigh, like you're happy." He began to weep. "I never knew a grave c'u'd be like that. It—it looked comfor'ble."

"Now," the woman said, impatiently, "you ain't goin' to talk about graves bein' comfortable. You ain't as sick as all that. You got nothin' but a cold."

And Big Dan, like a great child, motherless, rolled over and covered his face with the pillow and sobbed.

### 12

One of the frankest of our foreign critics wrote of Dan at the height of his power: "He is a living proof that the workingman believes he has the same right to vote for work that the business man has to vote for trade. He indicates that in a democracy where all are politically free the wage slave will sell his political freedom to ameliorate the conditions of his economic servitude. He signifies that poverty can organize and follow its leader and plunder property unabashed by all the moral fulminations

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of its victim. He means that no reform movement can permanently defeat his kind until the reformers recognize that the voter on the lower East Side has the same right to sell his vote for a wage as the voter on the upper West Side has to sell his vote for an income."

And all or that may be true, but I think if this social philosopher had seen Dan blubbering into a pillow, he might have understood that the Big One was what he was because he had never been anything but an overgrown boy, with merely boyish ideals of loyalty to his gang, with a boy's immature sense of responsibility to society, with all a boy's unsocialized ego instincts, and a boy's dependence on affection, and a boy's hatred for his censors, and a boy's revolt against his punishment.

### III. MRS. MURCHISON

#### 1

YOU remember Mrs. Murchison? No. I suppose not. Her death in a London air raid, in July, 1916, recalled her to the memory of the American newspaper morgues for only two or three sticks of an obituary. And the name of her son, Major Wallace Bruce, printed in the British casualty lists later in the same year, went unremarked even by our newspapers, so far as I saw. Yet Mrs. Murchison and her son were once very distinguished Americans. If she had died in July, twenty years ago, every front page on the continent would have displayed her name in the largest type of the day. She had achieved distinction in the way that is most open to an American woman—she had married a rich man and been accused of murdering him.

She rather marred that distinction, finally, by being found “not guilty”—if you remember. And if you do not remember, you have forgotten probably because of the very fact that she *was* found not guilty. She failed to reach the ultimately memorable elevation of the electric chair; and, as an innocent woman wrongly suspected of murder, she ended by being proved unworthy of that natural human interest in *musée* monsters with which you had read

of her, so that you would be justified in dismissing her from your memory as one of life's minor disappointments of romantic hope.

I am venturing to recall her to you now because I have learned that she was guilty. She killed her husband. And she killed him in cold blood.

## 2

That fact, if I may say so, makes her a perfect specimen for my purposes. She had already everything else to make her perfect. She was intelligent. She was rich. She was well educated and well dressed. She had the manners of a gentlewoman. And she was, above all, appealingly pretty. When she first appeared in court an audible breath of surprised pity exhaled like a gasp from the crowd in the court room, and throughout the trial public sympathy fairly brooded over her in an attentive silence as she spoke, or buzzed in suppressed resentful whispers over the testimony of the witnesses against her.

For me, it was not so much her beauty that was moving—the beauty of a small dark woman with large eyes and the sort of infantile nose that stirs the protective strain in masculine affection irresistibly. What did for me was her contralto voice when she took the stand in her own defense. It was a thrilling, throaty voice, full of husky catches, tremulous and yet strongly frank. It was a strange

voice to issue from such a frail and inexpressive figure. And it was accompanied by no dramatic gesture whatever. Once she made as if to raise her hand in protest against some unnecessarily offensive questions which the prosecuting attorney asked her, but she let it fall back again into her lap, where the other hand clasped it with an odd effect of comforting it silently. And I seem to remember her slowly shaking her head as she answered, in her deepest tones: "No. No. No." But for the most part she sat motionless, pale, listening with mute attention and replying with the slightest possible movement of the lips, as if everything had been exhausted in her but her remarkable voice that seemed to come out of the depths of a forlorn spirit, shaken but innocent and not afraid.

It was impossible to associate such a voice with a guilty conscience. And even before we had heard her voice—in fact, before the jury was impaneled—Al ("Porky") Orpen of the *Sun* was willing to bet that she would be acquitted, and only Tom McQuade of the *World* would take him on it. Orpen, of course, was playing a sympathetic hunch; he knew nothing of the case; he had been sent to the trial as what would now be called a "sob artist," though his sobbing was sufficiently subdued by literary artistry to be acceptable even to the old *Sun*. McQuade was using his reason. He had been on the story of the murder from the day it broke. "She's guilty," he said. "No one else could have

killed him. Wait till you hear the evidence." Throughout the trial, he and Orpen argued with each other contemptuously whenever a recess gave them the opportunity. And although their conflicting advocacy did not affect the jury, it is important to this study of Mrs. Murchison, for out of McQuade's obstinate belief in her guilt there came to me the first grounds of proof that she was guilty.

Most important of all—though you have probably forgotten this, too—she was defended by Justin Littlejohn, who was then so far from being famous that McQuade was the only one of us at the press table who had ever seen him in court before. He appeared as a large, leisurely, prematurely bald young man with an indolent manner in repose and a deceptive air of simplicity. His opponent was a fighting lawyer, eloquent and dramatic, who seemed to be setting a ring pace that was too fast for poor Littlejohn. He objected incessantly to Littlejohn's questions, and Littlejohn did not seem to have the punch to break through this interference. He would say, dispiritedly: "If my learned friend objects, I withdraw the question." Or: "My client and I wish only to bring out the facts. I will put the question in any form that will be acceptable to the other side." He let the prosecution ask Mrs. Murchison questions that the judge himself objected to, and he listened silently to the wrangle that ensued. When he rose to address the jury, it was after a

peroration from the state attorney that mobilized all the emotions of melodrama and sent them storming over the lines of the defense with horse, foot, and artillery; and Littlejohn spoke, upon the reverberations of that uproar, dryly at first, and then confidentially, with an air of earnest candor, as if he were arguing a proposition in Euclid upon which a life depended, laying all his cards solemnly on the table at last, and ending: "Gentlemen, there is the truth as far as we know it. It is for you to decide."

I should not have observed him with any intelligent interest at all if McQuade had not announced, halfway through the trial, "He'll get her off!"

"He'll get her off," Orpen chuckled, "because she's innocent."

"Change attorneys with me," McQuade challenged, like the Irish after the Boyne, "and I'll lick you hands down. This man's a great criminal lawyer."

Orpen laughed. "Hear Mac hunting an alibi!"

None of us liked McQuade—he was too cocksure and egotistic; but we all respected his intelligence. Accordingly, we began to study Littlejohn like a clinic of dramatic critics dissecting a new Hamlet. And I decided—as dramatic critics will—that if Littlejohn was not merely "playing himself," he was a genius. That is to say, I realized that if he was not whole-souledly convinced of his client's innocence, he was simulating the exterior of such a

conviction with incredible art. But then, I believed that she was innocent.

I saw only one doubtful indication that Littlejohn was playing a part. It was when Mrs. Murchison was being cross-examined by the attorney for the state. We had been watching Littlejohn to see whether he showed any nervousness while the prosecution picked and pulled at her story. He showed nothing but a massive and inert confidence. Suddenly, in the midst of her account of her married relations, she referred to her husband as her "father," and Littlejohn dropped his eyes to the papers on the table before him. The state attorney corrected her. "You mean your husband," he said. She replied, "Yes," but obviously without being aware that she was being corrected. A moment later she said "my father" again. The lawyer asked, sarcastically, "Why do you refer to Mr. Murchison as your father?" She looked at him bewildered, with a queer, confused expression, as if she realized that she had been thinking of Murchison as her father. She murmured, at last, "I don't know."

The state attorney let it pass with a sort of contemptuous sniff. Littlejohn had not raised his eyes from the table. His face had not changed a muscle. But his ears had turned as red as a guilty schoolboy's.

I could make nothing significant out of it at the time; but as I look back at it now I recognize it as

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the one betrayal Littlejohn made of the fact that he knew her story and was afraid she might expose herself inadvertently.

### 3

Her husband, as you may recall, was old Lucias Murchison, who began life as a telegraph operator and ended as the controlling owner of great accumulations of telegraph and telephone stock. He was almost as eccentric a figure in Wall Street as Russell Sage. He guarded his privacy from newspaper intrusion so jealously that it was a public surprise when the murder trial disclosed that Mrs. Murchison had once been his private secretary. She was his second wife and he was her second husband. He had had a family of daughters by his first marriage, but he was estranged from them. She had had a son, romantically named Wallace Bruce—her first husband having been one “Aleck” Bruce, a court stenographer—and Wallace was living in the Murchison household at the time of the murder.

Murchison was killed in his country house near Bedlington, and the trial was held at the county seat. The New York newspapers sent reporters, of course; and there was an audience of fashionable women from their suburban homes in the hills; but the crowd was a farm crowd that was larger in bad weather than when the conditions were good for fall plowing, and the intelligence of the jury was as difficult to appraise as a country jury’s always is.

The state attorney kept presenting them with the dilemma: "If she did not kill him, who did? No one else could have done it." Littlejohn persisted in the simple reiteration: "She is innocent. We do not know who killed him, but she is innocent."

It was an easy line of defense to take, but not so easy to maintain in the face of the evidence.

Murchison had been found dead on the floor of his bedroom with his throat cut. All the doors of his room had been locked on the inside and he was lying near the door of the bathroom that communicated with his wife's room. His razor, from the bathroom shelf, was found in his bed, and the blood on the pillows made it probable that his throat had been cut while he slept. Blood and fingerprints on the knob and key of the bathroom door indicated that he had staggered from his bed to close and lock that door, and had fainted while he was trying to get back to another door to summon help from the hall. And there was a written note on his dresser top—a note in an unformed girlish backhand—saying: "God is not mocked. Pray for me."

Mrs. Murchison, suffering from insomnia, had obtained some sleeping tablets from her physician on the previous day; she had taken several of these before going to bed that night; and she had evidently taken an overdose, because her maid had been unable to waken her in the morning, had knocked frantically on Murchison's door, and, failing to arouse him, either, had telephoned for the doctor.

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It was some time before the physician succeeded in bringing Mrs. Murchison back to consciousness. In the meantime the servants had forced Murchison's door and found him murdered.

At first, rumor had it that Mrs. Murchison had killed her husband and tried to kill herself. But the amazing message on the dresser was not in her handwriting. She wrote a very professional, flowing and secretarial, Spencerian script. And if she had intended to make a confession and kill herself, why should she disguise her writing?

It was the theory of the prosecution that she had risen in the night, had entered her husband's room through the bathroom—taking his razor from the bathroom shelf—and had cut his jugular vein while he slept. The pain of the wound had wakened him. He had struggled with her and she had fled. He had locked his door against her and died while he was trying to call some one to his aid. The note on the dresser had been written by her, in a disguised hand, to cast suspicion elsewhere. And, to account for the overdose of the sleeping draught, it was charged that she had taken a first dose, risen in the night, written the message in a disguised hand, killed her husband, taken a second draught, and slept till the doctor brought her to.

This was an arguable theory up to a certain point, but there were several difficulties with it. A maid had attended Mrs. Murchison in her rooms that night and had seen her prepare for bed. Mrs.

Murchison had been cheerful at the prospect of getting a good night's rest. She had taken her medicine eagerly and fallen asleep within an hour—for the maid had returned to ask her some question about household matters, had found her asleep, and had turned out an electric light that was still burning on her bedside table. This maid testified that Mrs. Murchison, in the morning, was sleeping in the same nightgown in which she had retired, and that it bore no evidences whatever of any such bloody struggle as had apparently taken place in Murchison's room. The doctor testified that her hands and arms showed no scratches, no bruises. She had been working in the flower beds that afternoon. She was "very choice" about her hands, as the maid said. She had put lotion on them at night and had gone to bed in gloves, so as not to soil the pages of the book with which she intended to read herself to sleep. The book was on the coverlet and she still wore the gloves when she was wakened. They were put in evidence at the trial so that the jury might see there were no blood stains on them. They were old white gloves that showed no signs of ever having been cleaned.

The prosecution tried to insinuate that she had worn gloves in order to overcome the danger of leaving fingerprints on the razor, on the door handle, or the paper on which she wrote, "God is not mocked." Littlejohn destroyed that insinuation with one earnest sentence in his summing-up: "If

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a woman intended to murder her husband in gloves, so as to leave no fingerprints, she would hardly let her maid see her making her guilty preparations to that end; she would put on the gloves secretly and hide them when she took them off, and she would hardly choose gloves of *white kid*."

Mrs. Murchison herself destroyed the probability that she had written the message on the dresser top. At the state attorney's direction, on the witness stand, she wrote and rewrote, "God is not mocked. Pray for me," over and over, with her gloves on and with them off, in an attempted backhand and even in a labored imitation of the guilty script. Nothing could overcome the difference between the faltering and unformed writing of the message and her own strong and professional chirography. The writing experts found certain letters in the message that resembled hers, but their testimony was no more convincing to a country jury than such testimony usually is. And when the prosecution made her son Wallace write the message—as if hoping to involve him as her tool in the crime—their effort was accepted as an admission that they knew Mrs. Murchison had not written it.

It was scrawled, in lead pencil, on the back of an envelope addressed to Murchison. There had been a number of letters to him lying on the dresser, and the murderer had evidently taken the one nearest at hand. And there had been handy, too, a gold pocket pencil attached to a watch chain, which

Murchison had placed there, with his watch, before he went to bed. No fingerprints were recognizable on the metal; it had been taken up carelessly by several persons before the detectives put it away for examination. There was no blood on the envelope, but, of course, it was obvious that the message had been written before the murderer attacked Murchison.

Altogether, there was no definite circumstantial evidence to connect Mrs. Murchison with the incriminating note. It used the terms of religious fanaticism, and she was not even a church member. Had she ever heard the phrase, "God is not mocked"? Yes. She had had the usual religious instruction in her youth. Her father had been a very devout man, and she thought she remembered him saying, "God is not mocked." She could not be sure. She thought it was a quotation from the Bible, but she could not place it.

Her father, for religious reasons, objected to her marriage with her first husband, an agnostic. She ran away from home, and she never saw her father again. He died. After her marriage she ceased attending church. She did not think of religion very often, now. Did she believe in hell? She did not know. She thought not. In her girlhood she had worried very much about things of that sort, but now she just tried "to be kind and just to people and not to do anyone any harm." She did not think much about whether she would be punished or rewarded in another world.

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"Do you believe," the prosecutor thundered, "that murder will be punished in the other world?"

"Yes," she said, wearily, "I should think that would be, if anything was."

He threatened her with an accusing forefinger. "Don't you *know* it? Doesn't your *conscience* tell you?"

"I try not to judge people," she replied. "I don't feel capable of judging wisely. I'm not very intelligent."

And it was impossible to decide whether or not she knew she had evaded him.

When he first asked her to write the words, "God is not mocked. Pray for me," she hesitated and held back. He demanded, "You have some aversion to writing those words, have you?" And she answered, hoarsely: "Yes. I was fond of Mr. Murchison. He was very kind to me."

This pitifully choked reply was received by the court room with a sibilant whisper of sympathy that was almost a hiss against the prosecutor. The judge said gravely, "It would be well if counsel conducted his cross-examination so as to give less the impression of a 'third degree.'" And the attorney for the state lost his temper, argued with the court, was rebuked, and turned sulky.

Consequently, he approached, with some emotional handicap, the problem of proving Mrs. Murchison's motive for the murder. He asked her whether she had married Murchison for money.

After a transparent pause for thought, she replied: "I wanted a home for myself and Wallace. Mr. Murchison offered me one. I respected him. He was always considerate, gentle—"

"Did you love him?" the attorney broke in.

"I—I liked him," she said. "He was ——"

"Did you *love* him?"

"There are so many different sorts of love ——"

"You know the sort I mean."

"He was a good man ——"

"Did you love him?"

She thought a moment, as if examining herself, looking up at the dingy court-room window with unseeing eyes. Her face changed. "Why, yes," she said, deeply, as if realizing the truth for the first time. "I think I did."

The attorney tried to cover his discomfiture by asking, "Did you get the money you married him for?"

Littlejohn interposed, "If the court will permit ——"

"Objection sustained," the judge snapped. "There is no evidence that she married him for money."

"Well, then," the prosecutor sneered, "was your allowance as large as you expected it to be?"

"I hadn't expected anything definite," she explained. "He paid all the household bills and left me a check for myself on the first of every month."

"And your son? Did he have all the money he needed?"

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"I never took money from Mr. Murchison for my son," she said. "I supported him out of my allowance."

"Did you have some feeling about taking money from Mr. Murchison for your son?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

Well, it appeared—to summarize a tedious examination—that she and Murchison had had a tacit disagreement about the boy's education, about her keeping him tied to her apron strings, about the way in which she mollycoddled him, and so forth. Murchison had evidently felt some jealousy of her devotion to the boy. And he was not very sympathetic with young people. He was just, but he was stern. She had often felt depressed because Murchison did not take the boy into his affection. It was the one thing in the world that had worried her.

"As a result of this worry," the prosecutor asked her, "did you ever feel an impulse to kill your husband?"

"If I had," she said, "I should have thought I was going insane."

"Did you ever think that you would be happier if your husband were dead?"

"No. I was happier than I had ever been before. My life hadn't been an easy one before my marriage to him."

"Did you know that in case of his death you were entitled to a third of his estate under the law?"

"He was not unwell. We had never spoken of his death. I did not know anything about his financial affairs."

"Did you know that you were entitled to a third of his estate?"

"I didn't know how large the estate was."

"I appeal to the court," he cried, exasperated, "to direct the witness to answer my question."

The judge said, sourly, "She seems to be answering the intent and purpose of it."

"Did you know how large your — I mean, did you know you were entitled to a third of your husband's estate?"

"No," she said. "I thought it depended on his will."

"Then you *did* think about his will, *didn't* you?"

"Not till after he was dead. Then I wondered what was going to become of me."

4

Looking back on that cross-examination now—with what I have since learned—I recognize as guileful the way in which she avoided giving a direct answer to the prosecutor's question about whether she had ever felt an impulse to kill her husband. But I can recall no reserve of expression, no change of tone, to indicate where guile was hidden. Her manner throughout was the manner of an innocent, defenseless woman, grief-stricken,

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resigned, and dignified. It was impossible for any merely human jury to find her guilty.

But, if *she* had not killed her husband, who had?

Murchison had been accustomed to lock all the doors of his bedroom except the door to the bath-room that communicated with his wife's chamber. And Mrs. Murchison usually locked the outer door of her room, too, so that their sleeping apartments were cut off from the rest of the house. She had gone to bed on this night before the maid had finished in the room. She had intended to rise and lock the door later, after she had read awhile, but the drug had evidently overcome her unexpectedly. The murderer, therefore, had had access to Murchison's room, from the hall, through her bedchamber. But if Murchison had not been attacked by her, why did he not go to her for aid? Why, with his last effort, did he lock his door against her and try to summon assistance elsewhere?

Why, indeed?

The prosecution began its case by showing that the downstairs doors and windows had been locked all night. And the servants who opened them in the morning testified that none of them had been tampered with. Murchison's bedroom windows, on the second floor, had been open, but they were covered with wire fly screens that hooked on the inside. Mrs. Murchison's windows were similarly protected. There were no footprints in the flower beds beneath those windows, no ladder marks in

the mold, and no holes in the screens through which a man on a ladder could have reached the screen hooks. The outer doors were all fitted with old-fashioned locks, they could not be opened with latch keys, and all the big iron keys had been in their locks that morning. No one had entered the house from the outside till the doctor arrived. It seemed beyond doubt, therefore, that Murchison had been killed by some one in the family.

But the servants, and their relations with Murchison, and the conditions in the family generally, were all as old-fashioned as the doors. Murchison had lived a simple, patriarchal sort of life in the country, surrounded by retainers who had been with him for years. The housekeeper, who was sixty years old, was the wife of the gardener, who was seventy. The dining-room maid and the housemaid were her nieces. Mrs. Murchison's maid was a simple-looking Irish girl, "just out from the old country," a relative and protégée of the coachman, who was a character in his own right. And so with the others. They were all put on the witness stand, and they added some comedy to the case, but their testimony made it impossible to believe that any of them could have killed Murchison. They spoke of him with reverential and affectionate awe. He overpaid them. And he had never corrected or complained of one of them in his life, apparently.

The housekeeper ruled them for him—and for Mrs. Murchison—with a motherly tyranny. She

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spoke of them as if she felt nothing for them but tolerant contempt. Did she suspect any of them of having killed Murchison?

"Kill!" she cried. "I can't get one o' them to kill a *hen* when I need it. I have to get Johnny Bowes, the butcher's boy, to come an' do it for me."

Could Mrs. Murchison's maid have killed him?

"I'd as soon suspect her," she said, "of breaking into the Vatican an' killing her Pope."

Young Wallace Bruce was out of the reckoning because he had gone, that day, to visit some school chums at the seaside. There was no one on whom the faintest sort of plausible suspicion could be fastened—except Mrs. Murchison. She *must* be guilty, unless you were to believe that Murchison himself had written the "Pray for me" note in a disguised hand, had gone back to bed with his razor to cut his own throat, and had then crawled out again, for no reason whatever, and staggered across the room to lock the bathroom door.

For a time there was a suspicious discrepancy between Mrs. Murchison's testimony as to the number of sleeping tablets she had taken and the evidence of the box containing what remained of the drug. At first she swore that she had taken but one tablet. The druggist testified that he had given her two dozen tablets on the doctor's prescription. There were only twenty-one tablets left in the box. It was to account for this latter number that the prosecution charged her with rising in the

night and taking the second dose that left her stupefied till the doctor revived her.

Littlejohn solved the puzzle ingeniously. The doctor's prescription had not specified the size of the dose. He had at first told her, he said, to take two tablets. Then he had changed his mind and advised her that one would be sufficient. When Mrs. Murchison was on the stand, Littlejohn brought out that she had been in doubt about how many tablets to take. She thought the doctor had ordered one, and then she remembered that he had prescribed two. As she recalled her hesitation, she could not be sure whether she had taken one or two.

"Is it possible," Littlejohn asked, "that you dissolved one in the water, and then, on second thoughts, decided that you should take two—and added *two more*, absent-mindedly?"

"Yes," she admitted, "that is possible."

And the doctor testified that if she had taken three tablets upon going to bed, she must have slept from the time the maid left her until he himself revived her in the morning.

This became the strongest point in Littlejohn's summing up. The next strongest was the obvious one that she had no motive for killing her husband. And, finally, there was no circumstantial evidence to connect her with the crime except the single fact that Murchison had locked his door against her after he had been attacked.

"The dying man," Littlejohn said, "staggering around his room in the dark, may have mistaken his direction and locked the wrong door. Or he may have supposed that he had been attacked by his wife because he saw his assailant flee into her bed-chamber. Or, in the extremity of his panic, he may have been thoughtless enough to try to save himself by locking the murderer in his wife's room while he summoned aid.

"Who was that murderer? Because all the doors and windows of the house were locked, the prosecution contends that he or she must have been a member of the Murchison household. But he may have entered the house earlier in the evening, before it was locked up for the night, and concealed himself till the servants were asleep. Escaping through Mrs. Murchison's bedroom, he may have returned to his hiding place and made off in the morning under cover of the excitement in the house, when the doors were opened again. Or, in a house so large, he may have had some unguarded means of entrance and egress which the state has not discovered.

"It is plain, from the terms of his written confession, that he—or she—was a religious maniac. Neither Mrs. Murchison nor any other member of the household can be suspected of religious mania. And if she wrote the message in a disguised hand, in order to throw suspicion elsewhere, why did she not write it in terms that would accomplish her end? Why did she not sign some name to it? Why

did she write a message which has thrown suspicion nowhere?

"The learned counsel for the prosecution argues that Mrs. Murchison was the person who would chiefly profit by her husband's death. But he has failed to show that she had any wish to profit by it. He argues that—under the peculiar circumstances of her husband's death—she was the person who was most easily able to do away with him. But he has failed to show that she took advantage of her opportunity. The wife of any wealthy man is most likely to profit under his will; and she is likely to be, by circumstances, most able to kill him in his sleep. On such evidence as the prosecution has presented against Mrs. Murchison, the wife of any murdered man could be suspected of his murder. It is not enough. Suspicion, however well founded, is not enough.

"It was for this reason that I allowed my client to go on the witness stand in her own defense. It seemed to me that her innocence would be so evident that no suspicion of her could endure. For this reason, too, I made no objection to the many objectionable questions which the prosecution asked her. Throughout the trial I have made no attempt to take advantage of those technicalities by means of which a lawyer may so often protect a guilty client. I allowed Mrs. Murchison to be put through an examination so unreasonably merciless that the court has rightly characterized it as a 'third degree.'

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I had no fear of the result. I knew that Mrs. Murchison wished not only to prove her own innocence, but to give to the state every aid in finding the murderer, by answering any question that could throw the faintest light whatever on the circumstances of the crime."

And so on.

Long before he had finished his argument it was evident that the jury was on his side. He spoke as if he were one of them, their foreman, in the jury room itself, going over the case with them impartially and trying only to arrive at a just conclusion. And they listened to him absorbedly, with reflective faces, unconscious of everything but the points that he made, whereas they were restless while the prosecutor spoke, listened self-consciously, and looked at his hands or down at his feet when he tried to hold their eyes while he emotionalized them with his eloquence.

### 5

Her acquittal was expected, therefore, by everyone in the court room. And it was accepted without question by everyone outside the prosecution—so far as I saw—except Tom McQuade. "She's guilty, just the same," he insisted, coldly.

"I bet you she'd be *acquitted*," Orpen said, "but I'd bet you she's *innocent*, too, if I knew any way to decide the bet."

"I owe you a box of cigars," McQuade conceded.

"That's all right. But if I can ever bring you proof that she's guilty you'll return the stakes, will you?"

"Yes, and doubled."

"Good." McQuade gathered up his copy paper.

"Who's to be referee?" Orpen asked. "Who's to decide whether or not your proofs prove anything?"

"I'll leave it to you."

"No," Orpen said, "that wouldn't be fair."

"I'll leave it to anyone you name."

Orpen nodded toward me. "Leave it to him, eh?"

"Perfectly satisfactory," McQuade said.

Orpen winked at me. "Is there anything else I can agree to, Mac, to help you save your face?"

McQuade took himself off without replying.

"The trouble with Mac is," Orpen philosophized, "he depends too much on facts. I used to do it once, myself, but I've learned that in newspaper work correct facts aren't as valuable as correct impressions."

There was an old rivalry between these two men—the rivalry of antipathetic temperaments. McQuade was a keen, hard-bitten worker with a close-lipped mouth that looked as if he gnawed it. He was always as busy as some instinctively acquisitive animal accumulating facts, acquaintances, contacts. "The things a newspaper man knows and doesn't publish are his best stock in trade," he used to say. He was accurate in his reports, making full

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notes in shorthand and transcribing them carefully, writing a curt style, in hard little sentences, without charm.

Orpen was fat, lazy, meditative. He has made a better magazine writer than he ever was a newspaper man, but he had one faculty as a reporter that was justly envied—he could write excellent copy and at the same time listen to what was being said and watch what was going on. At the Murchison trial, day after day, he started writing in legible longhand as soon as the court proceedings began, and he continued writing, without making a short-hand note, listening to the examination of the witness on the stand while he was still reporting what a previous witness had testified. He used to say: "It's just a trick. You sort of split your mind. You listen with one ear while you write with the other." I have seen him write that way and carry on a desultory conversation. He would have his day's work on the Murchison trial finished when the court adjourned—all except writing the lead for his stuff. McQuade would have to gather up his short-hand notes and hurry away to write his story from them, in quiet. Orpen twitted him about it. He teased McQuade rather cruelly as a constant practice.

"Mac needs it," he said. "He has too much ego in his cosmos."

It was undoubtedly under the spur of Orpen's teasing that McQuade went about so determinedly

to get his evidence against Mrs. Murchison. How he did it I do not know, but he certainly gave up his belated summer holiday to it, and trailed Mrs. Murchison's past—through the years of her married life with "Aleck" Bruce, the court stenographer, back to the early days when she was Mabel Andrews on a farm in the Putnam Valley upstate.

He returned with several disturbing bits of evidence. The first was that the saying, "God is not mocked," had been a favorite one of Mrs. Murchison's mother. This might be significant, or it might not. The second was that as a girl, before she married Bruce, Mrs. Murchison had had little education; she had taken a course in shorthand and typewriting in order to assist her husband in his work, and, in helping him, she had been much about the courts. This, McQuade argued, accounted for her ability to take care of herself on the witness stand.

"It accounts for it," Orpen pointed out, "if she was guilty. If she was innocent, she didn't *need* to 'take care' of herself."

But the final item in McQuade's indictment could not be set aside so easily. He had two photographs: one of the "God is not mocked" message that had figured in the trial, the other of the signature of "Mabel Andrews" as it appeared on the application for her first marriage license. And Mabel Andrews had written her name on that application in an unformed, girlish backhand that was identical with

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the handwriting of the message from the murderer of her second husband.

Orpen brought the evidence to me as the referee between McQuade and him. "Do you think this proves her guilty?"

Whether it did or not, it was a whale of a newspaper story. That was all I could see in it, at first.

"Yes," Orpen complained, "but it's McQuade's story, not yours or mine. Do you think it proves her guilty?"

"Mac thinks so, I suppose?"

"Sure of it."

"What do *you* think?" I asked.

"I've a hunch that Littlejohn might throw some light on it."

"We couldn't go to Littlejohn and put him wise to this, without Mac's permission."

"No," he said, "but Mac 'll have to see Littlejohn before he prints it, anyway. We might all three go together, if that suits *you*."

It suited me. It even flattered me. They were both veteran newspapermen, and I was not much more than a cub reporter. I wanted to see them at work, interviewing Littlejohn. I wanted to be associated with them in getting the biggest newspaper story of the day, as it seemed to me. I kept saying to myself: "Heavens! What a story!"

Orpen telephoned me, later, that McQuade would come; that he had made an appointment with Littlejohn to see us at eleven o'clock next morning;

that we were to meet McQuade at the door of the *World Building* at 10.45, and go together to Littlejohn's office.

"Heavens! What a story!"

6

"Well, it may look like a hell of a good story to *you*," Orpen grumbled, on our way to meet McQuade, "but I have a hunch it 'll fizzlie before it gets to print."

"Why?"

"Because that's the way life is. Things never come up to specifications. Mac probably suspected there was no meat in his egg or he wouldn't have let us see it till he'd hatched it out."

I suspected that McQuade had been so eager to crow over Orpen that he had not been able to wait for incubation. And certainly, when we met him, there was enough superior silence in his manner to justify my suspicion. He nodded briefly and went along with us.

"Who does the talking at this interview?"  
Orpen asked.

"You do, if you want to."

"I'm going to tell him about the bet and show him the photos."

"That's all right with me."

"Good."

They did not speak another word outside Little-

john's office—the old office of Littlejohn, Varley, McNeill & Littlejohn, in Chambers Street. The reception room was a sort of law library, and the separate offices of the partners opened off it. Justin Littlejohn was reading a newspaper at a shabby old walnut desk when a clerk ushered us in to him. A fire of cannel coal was burning in the fireplace of a previous generation, and the room was full of the peaty smell of the smoke. I judged that Littlejohn was using his father's office. Old Martin Littlejohn had died about six months before.

He greeted us absent-mindedly and invited us to sit. The character of the room, his air of abstraction, his distinguished mask of face—and the general bagginess of his clothes—made me feel as if we were interviewing some literary philosopher in his workshop.

Orpen began to explain our coming. He had a humorous slow drawl, and he sat in his chair in an exaggerated attitude of sprawling ease. Littlejohn listened to him benevolently. McQuade also listened, watching him as if he were interested in Orpen only. But I gathered that Littlejohn was as aware of McQuade as McQuade was secretly intent on Littlejohn. The very fixity of their attention upon Orpen betrayed them to me.

Littlejohn made no comment except to say, "Yes, I remember you all," when Orpen explained that we had reported the Murchison trial. Orpen went on to tell about the bet that he had made with

McQuade, and about the renewal of that wager after Mrs. Murchison's acquittal. Littlejohn nodded. Orpen described rather whimsically McQuade's search for new evidence, and in the same bantering manner he laid the two photographs before Littlejohn. I held my breath for the dramatic climax. Littlejohn merely glanced at the photos, as if he had seen them before, and said, "Yes?" inquiringly.

"Well," Orpen went on, undiscouraged, "before I decided that I'd have to give back Mac's cigars I wanted to hear what *you* had to say about that handwriting. Do I lose my bet?"

Littlejohn, for answer, turned slowly to McQuade. "What made you think she was guilty?"

"The evidence in the case."

"Oh." He seemed disappointed. He looked down at his blotter a moment. "It was you that interviewed the mother about a month ago, was it?"

"Yes."

Littlejohn smiled at Orpen confidentially. "We thought it was a state detective. We wondered whether they were trying to fasten the crime on Mrs. Andrews."

Orpen chuckled.

There was a busy and significant silence.

Littlejohn tilted back in his swivel chair and clasped his hands behind his head.

"Well, gentlemen," he said, putting aside the whole story of the bet as if it were a subterfuge we

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had invented, "my client has been acquitted, and a person cannot be tried twice for the same crime. The case cannot be reopened."

"We know that," McQuade put in.

"So if you publish these photographs you will merely redirect suspicion against a woman who will be unable to clear herself—since nothing that she can say will be under oath—and no decision on her defense will be judicial."

"If you can give me any innocent explanation of those photographs," McQuade said, "I'll not publish them."

Littlejohn, with his head thrown back, looked down his nose at McQuade. Then he unclasped his hands, dropped forward in his chair, and challenged Orpen with an interrogating eye.

"It's McQuade's story, not ours," Orpen explained. "We can't print it until after *he* does."

Littlejohn's expression did not change.

"Oh!" Orpen said. "If you want our promise—— Yes. I promise."

I added mine, in reply to a glance from Littlejohn.

"Well," he said, at last, "I don't know the truth about the case, but I can tell you my theory. She killed him in her sleep."

We all sat up together. "In her sleep!"

"Yes. She probably took one of those tablets when she went to bed. The effects of it, I should say, wore off in the night, but left her half drugged and in what, I believe, is called 'a hypnagogic

state.' In that condition she went to the bathroom to take another dose of the stuff, found her husband's razor on the shelf, wrote that message on the dresser, cut his throat, went back to the bathroom, took two more tablets, and fell asleep without any consciousness whatever of what she had done."

It was McQuade who broke the staring silence to ask, "Why didn't you offer that theory at the trial?"

"Because I was doubtful whether a country jury would believe it. I considered that Mrs. Murchison was morally innocent of her husband's death. She was entirely convinced of her own innocence. She had no recollection of what she had done in her sleep—if she had really done it—and I was afraid that if I suggested this sleepwalking theory to her, some memory of what had happened might return to her, perhaps in the form of something that she had dreamed. So I pretended to her that I believed Murchison had been killed by a religious maniac who had got into the house in some way that was not known; and I put her on the stand in her own defense and let her win her case in her own way. And I think the verdict shows that I was right."

"How do you account for the handwriting?" McQuade pursued him.

Littlejohn reflected. "I don't know how to account for it," he admitted, "except in this way: Mrs. Murchison must have begun writing her present hand after she married that court stenographer. Probably her earlier handwriting was too

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illegible for him and he made her learn this professional script. You know she used to help him in his work? And in her sleep she must have returned to her schoolgirl writing."

"Yes," McQuade conceded. "That would explain it."

"Well, anyway, I win my bet," Orpen said. "She was innocent."

"She killed him," McQuadé insisted.

"That's my theory," Littlejohn explained. "I may be wrong. But I'm not wrong about *this*; she's an innocent woman. As her counsel, she could not have deceived me. She didn't know she had killed him, if she *did* it. And if you publish those photos you'll wreck what is left of a maimed life and mark her and her son with a suspicion they will never escape from. It's a damnable thing to do. And it's a damned dangerous thing for your editor to do, since she has the decision of a court declaring her innocent, and the law will uphold her."

McQuade met the implied threat with indifference. "Had she any motive for killing him—anything that would impel her to do it, in her sleep?"

"I don't know," Littlejohn said. "I didn't dare ask her, for fear of starting the suspicion in her mind that she had done it."

McQuade got up. "I think you're right," he said. "She killed him, undoubtedly. But either she didn't know it or she was the most amazing actress that ever went on the witness stand. I

accept your theory that she did it in her sleep.” He turned to Orpen. “You win.” He took up his hat. “You may have those photos if you want them, Mr. Littlejohn. I’ll not write the story. No one would believe the sleepwalking theory, and I don’t wish to accuse her of the alternative.”

This decision came as an incredible conclusion to me. At first I thought that McQuade was merely putting Littlejohn off his guard; that Mac had duplicates of the photographs and intended to print them if he could find any further evidence to support them. I did not understand him then as well as I did later. He was unscrupulous about the way he acquired information, but he was most scrupulous in the way he used it. And he was putting Littlejohn under an obligation—an obligation that would probably pay a high rate of interest as time went on.

Littlejohn shook hands with him. He shook hands with us all, saying good-by. But he took McQuade’s hand with a manner that gave, as well as accepted, a promise. And I understood Mac’s saying, “The things a newspaper man knows and doesn’t publish are his best stock in trade.”

His wisdom in not publishing the sleepwalking theory was vindicated when it leaked into the gossip of the editorial offices. It never found its way into print, so far as I know. And the Murchison murder—no matter what theory about it might be invented—had soon no more news value than last week’s stock quotations.

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It never occurred to me that Littlejohn had deceived and outwitted us. And I am sure it never occurred to Orpen or McQuade.

### 7

It did not occur to me till more than ten years later, when I learned the whole truth about Mrs. Murchison from Littlejohn himself.

I had not seen him at all, in the meanwhile—having given up newspaper work—and all I knew of him, after the Murchison trial, I gathered from the newspapers. I read a special article about him in the Sunday *World*, written, undoubtedly, by McQuade. And Orpen had a beautiful blurb about him in *Success*. The editorial comment, after the acquittal of Mrs. Deeming, admiringly accused him of being “almost a menace to the administration of justice,” because it had become “practically impossible to convict anyone whom he defends.” But the administration of justice got over the difficulty by retaining him as special counsel wherever that was possible, and the social system was more or less saved.

I did not doubt his ability, but I am afraid I believed that his reputation had been more than helped by McQuade and Orpen and the newspaper reporters. He seemed to know how to handle them. As far as I thought of him at all, I suspected him of having the sort of “bubble reputation” that is blown up by press puffery.

And then I walked into the smoking room of the Atlantic liner *Rotterdam* one wet morning in the summer of 1913—two days out of New York—and saw Littlejohn sitting at a card table, smoking an old green-cob pipe, and playing Canfield. He had aged. He was balder. He looked more of a personage than ever. But there was no mistaking him, and I must have stared at him, for he nodded when he looked up from his cards and caught my eye; and he said, “Good morning,” affably, and stretched out his hand as I approached.

I was flattered that he remembered me. Before the voyage was over I understood that he had not remembered me at all. He spoke to anybody who looked at him twice. And he would talk to anybody—man, woman, or child—who stayed beside him long enough to make a conversation possible. I never knew a man who stood less upon the formality of an introduction.

He began talking at once about solitaire—explaining, with a judicial twinkle, that he liked to play it “because the moral law doesn’t run against cheating in solitaire.” And he went on abusing the moral law because of the trouble it gave him.

“I’m as tired of it as a doctor must get of disease. I can cheat myself at solitaire and no one can quote the statutes against me.”

I supposed he must be pretty well fed up with the statutes—or words to that effect.

“Hate them,” he complained into his pipe.

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"Hate prosecuting people. We punish them because we don't understand them."

He played his cards a moment in silence, but with a receptive expression of attention lingering in my direction. I offered something about not having seen him since I had interviewed him in his office with Orpen and McQuade.

"Thanks for telling me," he said. "I knew I'd met you somewhere. Haven't seen you about lately, have I?"

I explained what had become of me. He dropped his game and gave himself up wholly to me and his pipe. When the pipe went out he lit a cigar. After the cigar he produced cigarettes. And all the time he asked questions, made philosophic comments, offered his own experiences to parallel mine, and appeared as interested as he was interesting. I could no more resist him than a bug could resist an entomologist—a genial Henri Fabre who knew more about my species than I knew myself—for, after his first few questions I got the feeling that he had some sort of secret diagram of me which he was verifying to himself. He was interested in my opinions, but only in so far as he could trace them back to their temperamental origins. He was much less interested in my adult experiences than in my childish ones. He led me to talk about my parents—by talking about his. Our conversation descended to the most astonishing intimacies before we separated for luncheon.

By that time my curiosity was so piqued that he could not have avoided me if he had tried. He did not try. It appeared that he had some vague plan of one day writing a book, and he was eager to discuss the practice of letters. I supposed that he planned a volume on the law. By no means. He was not interested in the law. He wanted to do a book on psychology—practical psychology—about the origin of character and the derivation of motive.

In my excitement I almost caught him by the collar. As a professing fictionist, a practical theory of human character and motive was as breath-catching to me as the promise of the long-sought philosopher's stone to an alchemist. Did he really know anything about that sort of psychology?

Most emphatically he did. And as he discussed it I began to understand his success as a criminal lawyer. He had found out a secret of the human mind by virtue of which he understood people better than they understood themselves. That knowledge had made it possible for him to influence juries uncannily. It had made it practically impossible for a criminal to deceive or evade him. It had made him, as the newspapers said, "almost a menace to the administration of justice" until justice retained him on its side. And it certainly made him the most interesting human being I had ever met.

This is hardly the place to attempt an exposition of his theory. One would need to write a book

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about it in order to give it worthily. All I wish to do, here, is to explain Mrs. Murchison as he explained her, inasmuch as her death and the death of her son have made it possible to tell the truth about her.

"It was the Murchison case," Littlejohn said, "that crystallized the whole thing for me. You watched that case? Well, let me tell you what was behind it."

### 8

Mabel Andrews Bruce Murchison was the daughter of Jonathan Andrews and Euphemia Cory Andrews, devout upstate farmers of a Revolutionary stock that had gone poor both in blood and in substance. Her early life had been narrow, puritanic, repressed. Her mother was an overworked farmer's wife, doing her duty by her God, her husband, and her house, implacably. If she ever felt any tenderness of affection for her daughter, she never let it soften her stern Old Testament attitude of disapprobation of young female flesh and its frailties as these were incarnated in her offspring. Consequently, whatever love the girl had, it was for her father. "You could guess that from her voice," Littlejohn said.

"How from her voice?" I asked. "What do you mean?"

"Well, it may not be universal," he replied, "but I find that women with those deep contralto voices

have usually imitated them from the father. What you love in your childhood, you imitate. That is the way character is formed in youth."

The father, however, was little more demonstrative than his wife. The girl loved and worshiped him, but with a quite religious reverence. "Undoubtedly," Littlejohn said, "he was her first conception of God. I mean that literally. In the child mind, before the intelligence develops, the parent is God. I want you to remember that. It is one of the keys to Mrs. Murchison."

Her career as a murderer began when she fell in love with a schoolmate, Aleck Bruce, the son of the village atheist. The father was a lawyer, a drunkard, and generally a "horrible example" to the Andrews household. "There was nothing against the boy, personally," Littlejohn explained, "except that he was the son of his father and shared in his father's religious heresies." The girl's parents were unaware of her infatuation for him until he left home to work as a stenographer in New York City and letters from him began to arrive at the farmhouse. Then there was a terrific scene. The silent girl would not agree to give him up. She would not tell her parents how far her love affair had gone. She would answer no questions, offer no explanations, make no promises.

"For my purpose," said Littlejohn, "the important thing about that scene was this: her father, in an attempt to work on her affection for him,

threatened, repeatedly, ‘If you marry that boy, it will kill me.’ And when she ran away with Bruce, and her father subsequently died—although there was no connection whatever between the two events —her mother wrote to her: ‘You have killed your father. God is not mocked.’”

This message, of course, had no effect of remorse on the girl. She knew she had not killed her father. And she had already escaped from her religious fears into the more liberal philosophy of life which her husband followed. They were happy together. Their child was born. She studied shorthand and typewriting to help Bruce in his work, and when he developed tuberculosis she sent him to a sanitarium in the Catskills, took her child back to her mother on the farm, and went to work in New York to support both husband and child.

“The significant thing here,” said Littlejohn, “is the mother again. As soon as she heard that Bruce was consumptive she accepted it as a punishment which God had visited upon her daughter. ‘God is not mocked.’ And when Bruce died, the moral was more pointed than ever. ‘God is not mocked.’ And when she realized that her daughter no longer believed in such interpositions of Providence, she still used the phrase as a warning of future calamities that were sure to befall the infidel. ‘God is not mocked.’”

“Mrs. Bruce was too sensible to pay much attention to these predictions. She went about her

business as a typist and stenographer, and tried to save enough money to take her boy away from his grandmother. She knew that his youth would be ruined, as her own had been, if she left him on the farm. Naturally, out of her small salary she was unable to save enough to give him the care and the food and the education and the outdoor exercise that he needed. He was sickly. So when Murchison proposed to her she accepted him. And all her problems seemed to be solved."

Littlejohn turned to me suddenly. "Did you ever hypnotize anyone?"

"No," I said. "Did you?"

He nodded. "I've been dabbling in it for years, privately, without really knowing what I was doing."

"Did you hypnotize Mrs. Murchison?"

He did not answer me. "You don't really do it," he said. "They do it themselves. You merely make the suggestion. You tell them that they're sleepy, for instance, and they seem to fall asleep. They don't actually sleep. They can hear what you say and they can answer you. And they'll do what you tell them to—up to a certain point. But if you tell them to do something they particularly don't want to do, they'll wake up."

"Well?"

"Well," he said, "here's what I'm driving at. The human mind seems to be in layers. The top layer is this intelligent mind that you and I are

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talking to each other with. That's the mind that goes to sleep. The next layer is the mind that dreams when you sleep. That's the layer that you reach when you hypnotize a person."

"And Mrs. Murchison?"

"In my second interview with her, before she was arrested, I saw that she was on the verge of a nervous collapse. She had not slept for some time. She had had insomnia before the murder, and it had become worse since the murder. That meant two things to me. First that she might be easily hypnotized, because her intelligent mind would be exhausted for lack of rest; and second that there must be something seriously wrong in her second layer of mind, to prevent her from sleeping. That's the usual cause of insomnia, I find."

"I see. So?"

"So I hypnotized her."

"How?"

"Why, I simply got her to make herself comfortable in an easy-chair, and told her to relax and rest herself a moment, and assured her that there was no need to worry, that I would take care of her case, and talked in a soothing voice for a while; and when she began to look drowsy I said: 'You're feeling sleepy. If you'll just close your eyes and rest'— And she said: 'I can't rest, Doctor. I'm afraid I'm going insane.'"

"Doctor?"

"Yes. She was half asleep already."

“Why was she afraid she was going insane?”

“I found that out later. Some time before, she had seen her husband shaving, and she’d had an almost ungovernable impulse to jog his elbow so as to make him cut his throat.”

“Good heavens!”

“And, of course, the impulse was so inexplicable to her that she thought she must be going mad.”

“Of course. And then?”

“Why, as soon as she said ‘Doctor’ I went to her and put my hand on her forehead, and over her eyes so as to close them, and I said: ‘No. You’re quite sane. You have no brain trouble at all. None at all. But you’re sleepy. Very sleepy.’ And I began to stroke her forehead. She relaxed so suddenly it was as if I had cut the string that held her up. And then she began to tell me.”

“About the murder?”

“Well, I thought she was talking about a dream —a dream in which she went to the bathroom to get some medicine, and when she lit the bathroom light she saw her husband’s razor lying, open, on the bathroom shelf. The door of his bedroom was ajar. She stood in that doorway, with the razor in her hand, and pushed the door open till the bathroom light just showed his head and shoulders where he lay in bed. He was on his back, with his face turned away from her, his throat exposed. She walked in, wrote something on an envelope, drew the razor blade across his throat, returned to the

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bathroom, took her medicine, and went back to bed."

"Do you mean she told you this as a dream?"

"That's what it sounded like."

"What did you do?"

"I said: 'Go to sleep—deeper. Go deeper.' She sank into a heavy, hypnotized stupor, breathing stertorously. And I sat down at my desk and had a sort of chill."

"I should think you might!"

He leaned forward, pointing with a gesture to the vague blackness of the ocean heaving slowly in the twilight. "I felt as you might feel if that water suddenly opened and showed you the depths under it." We were sitting in deck chairs, away from everybody, talking in low voices. "And, believe me," he said, "the human mind's as deep as that—every bit—and as unexplored. On the surface, she didn't know she had killed Murchison. She hadn't a suspicion of it. She was innocent. But just below the surface, she knew that she had killed him as if in a dream—although she didn't remember that dream."

"How do you know she didn't?"

"I'd stake my life on it."

"Well?"

"Well, I took her down deeper. I wanted to know *why* she had killed him."

"Yes?"

"And there I found that she hadn't killed Murchison, at all. She had killed her father."

*“Her father?”*

“Yes. She had killed her father—in the person of Murchison—because she wanted to be rid of him so as to be alone with Aleck Bruce—in the person of his son, Wallace.”

*“I don’t understand.”*

“She had merely repeated the tragedy of her girlhood. Murchison was serving as her father. The boy was substituting for her sweetheart. She had killed Murchison so as to be free to give all her love to the boy, just as she had killed her father to go to her lover.”

*“But she never killed her father!”*

“Not to the intelligent mind, no. But this had gone on, deeper down. And down there, in her childish mind, her mother had told her she killed her father and she believed it. Moreover, she had killed her God. She had abandoned her church and all her early religious beliefs. And when she spoke from that depth in her mind, you couldn’t tell whether she was talking of her father, or the God of her childhood, or Murchison. They were all the one person—just as her son Wallace and his father, Aleck Bruce, were one person.”

“Great Scott!” I said. “That’s why she referred to Murchison as her father, at the trial!”

“Exactly. And that’s why she had the crazy impulse to jog Murchison’s elbow when he was shaving—an impulse so without reasonable motive that it made her think she must be going crazy.”

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"And she didn't know anything of all this?"

"Not a thing. Murchison had been behaving unpleasantly to the boy, and that had depressed her out of all proportion, but she did not know why. She didn't know anything of what had happened—nor why it had happened."

"Then do you mean that she went temporarily insane and killed Murchison? Or do you mean that she did it in her sleep?"

He leaned back and spread his hands. "There you are! What is insanity? What is sleep? Under your upper mind layer of intelligence is this layer of an earlier, childish mind—uncivilized, primitive. It is this mind that commits crimes, half the time. It commits the crimes, in my experience, even when the intelligent mind actually carries them out. In Mrs. Murchison's case, there was no connection between the two minds. But I have seen other cases in which the two minds worked together, so that the intelligent mind watched the other one write the message and cut the throat—without being able to interfere. That is why our method of prosecuting criminals is as foolish as our ancestors' way of punishing the insane."

"But good heavens!" I protested, "do you mean that we're all at the mercy of this sort of thing?—that anyone, at any time, may be taken possession of —?"

He stopped me with a hand on my arm. "Listen," he said, slowly, in a low tone, "but don't

repeat this. I don't want people to think I'm crazy. Underneath all these layers, deeper down, there's something else. Before I brought Mrs. Murchison out of her trance I tapped it in her—something deeper down that seemed to know what she had done, and how she had done it, and to know that she was innocent, and to want her saved. It acted that way. It acted like some one else speaking to me through all that confused mass of disjointed stuff that came to me." He whispered it finally, "A soul."

And before I could speak he rose and walked away, quietly, in the darkness.

### 9

I did not see him again that evening, and we ran into rough weather that night, and I did not see anyone outside of my stateroom for three days. When I was well enough to crawl upstairs to a deck chair my interest in psychology was not very robust, and Littlejohn was busy with some new acquaintances. He sat with me one afternoon and discussed the secondary mind layer as the sole seat of character and the source of all motive, narrating illustrative examples from his experience. I felt as if all my mind layers had been softly churned together into one faintly sickish instability, and I decided to postpone psychology until I got something solid under my brain base. I was going to Boulogne-sur-

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Mer, with an assignment to work in Paris. He was leaving us at some English port of call. We agreed to look each other up in New York.

The war intervened, and I did not see him again till I ran into him, crossing Lafayette Park in Washington, in December, 1917. He was doing war work with the Department of Justice and he looked worn out.

"I've exhausted myself chewing gum," he replied to some alarmed comment of mine. "I'm trying to cut down my smoking. What are you doing here?"

I told him.

"Oh, damn the Kaiser!" he said. "You're worse off than I am. If there's anyone in the country has a kick, he swings it into you people. Come up and chew with me some day—gum."

I promised to. He waved a genial good-by and made off through the winter slush. I had forgotten to ask him whether he had written his book on psychology. I decided to look him up during the holiday season, if there was to be any holiday season that year in Washington; but on December 22d I heard that he had broken down from overwork and gone to a sanitarium. The last word I had of him he was an invalid in the south of France, and no one seemed to know anything about his book.

## IV. WARDEN JUPP

"He has been warden since 1896, and his record is one of orderly, efficient, fearless and aggressively honest service. He is a remarkable man."

—Lincoln Steffens, *McClure's Magazine*.

### 1

**I**F you were to say that Warden Jupp was the most fascinating man you ever knew, you might be telling the truth, but you would never be able to prove it. People would expect to hear that he was something superlatively brilliant, unusual, picturesque. And he had none of these qualities. He was as commonplace as sunshine, and as miraculous. His mystery lay in the inscrutability of the completely simple. He was like one of those masterpieces of art that seem to have occurred as a perfect whole, without the intervention of any artistic process.

I am speaking of his personality, you understand, not of his appearance—although his appearance was inscrutable enough. He was a small, elderly, fat man, bald, rotund, and thoughtfully silent. He was shaped somewhat like Mr. Pickwick—in modern, ready-made clothes—but more like a duck's egg. And you would have said that he held as little possibility of surprise and eccentricity in him as a

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duck's egg. The only superficial characteristic that I could find peculiar about him was the fact that even in the hottest weather he wore, on top of his little round face, a little round derby. He never, it seemed, wore a straw hat.

This was hardly enough to have come a thousand miles to discover, although it proved in the end to be significant.

### 2

The magazine that had sent me was interested, of course, in Warden Jupp's work; but the editor believed that his readers were interested more in the personalities of the conspicuous than in their achievements; I was supposed to do a sort of "soul portrait" of Jupp, using his work merely as a background—the man in his milieu, but the man more than the milieu—and the trouble was that Jupp appeared to have no more expressiveness outside of his work than a mechanical piano has outside of its playing.

I carried Lincoln Steffens's published article on Jupp to help me, but after meeting Jupp I judged that Steffens had been perhaps as much baffled as I was. Certainly he had made no attempt to dissect Jupp. He had had a less surgical assignment, however. He had come to the little Middle Western town while he was investigating the political conditions of the state (*for McClure's Magazine*) and he had been able to "do" Jupp as a reform warden who

had defeated the prison ring of political grafters, broken their power to exploit the helpless convicts, and made the penitentiary a little model of what a salutary purgatory—rather than what a hopeless hell—a modern prison might be. Steffens had discovered Jupp, as he discovered many other social exemplars in America. He had told Jupp's story so successfully that there was no need for any other magazine writer to repeat it. But he had made Jupp temporarily so famous that a follow-up story was editorially worth while. And the natural sequel was a study, an appreciation, an interpretation of the man himself.

I followed over Steffens's trail without finding any illuminating material that he had overlooked. Jupp was still performing his daily miracles. Many of his convicts were outside the prison walls, with heads unshaven and faces tanned, working on the prison farms from which Jupp obtained meat and dairy products and garden truck for the prison kitchens. Gangs of his criminals were making roads, at a distance of fifty miles from the penitentiary, with no prison guards to watch them—with only an armed trusty or two patrolling the camp at night to see that no unconvicted citizen of the neighborhood stole the road tools while the convicts slept. Jupp had built a prison hospital, from the plans of a condemned architect, under the supervision of an imprisoned building contractor, with the labor of carpenters, stone masons, bricklayers,

plumbers, and roofers from the penitentiary cells. In the same way he had remodeled and modernized the cell houses. He had set up trade schools among the prisoners. He had encouraged many of them to take correspondence courses in subjects that interested them. He had turned his penitentiary into a sort of academy for social failures who had been tried and rejected. He was reclaiming them as easily as if they had been boys who had failed in a college examination and been sent to jail for their failure. And he was doing it without any theory—as far as I could see—without any philosophy, merely by the exercise of practical common sense.

Under my persistent questions he formulated, reluctantly, some three or four generalizations only. “There’s no such thing as a criminal class. They’re just men like you and me.” “Out of every hundred convicts, there’s always maybe five or six that I can’t do anything with. They ought to be in insane asylums.” “I don’t usually have any trouble with a murderer. It’s the hobo that’s hardest to handle.” “Anyone could do what I’m doing. There’s no trick about it. You just have to know how to get along with people.”

To the world at large, of course, the inexplicable wonder was, why didn’t Jupp’s unguarded road gangs make their get-away? To Jupp the answer was simple: “I don’t give a man any outside work until I’m sure he won’t throw us down.” How did he make sure of that? By studying the man, by

getting reports on him from the guards and trusties, by correspondence with his friends and relatives, by talking with the man himself.

I watched and studied Jupp in several such talks, without learning much. "Well, boy," he would say to a new arrival, "here you are, and you're here for five years, less what we can take off for good conduct, eh? Well. We're all trying to make things as easy for ourselves as we can in this boarding house. We don't want you here any longer than we can help, and we don't want you to come back when you leave. We'll always have boarders enough without you. We don't care what you're here for. The question with us is, how 're we going to get along with you now that they've shoved you in on us? And the answer to *that* is—it's up to you. See?"

He sat at his desk, with his hat on the desk blotter before him, rather indifferent, slightly bored, completely matter-of-fact. His manner said: "Here's my proposition. Take it or leave it, I don't care."

He neither looked attentively at the convict nor avoided looking at him. He showed no sympathy, no hostility, no superiority, no desire to ingratiate or persuade—no feeling and no purpose at all that I could see, except the one that he expressed—to make a difficult situation as easy as possible for all concerned. But I noticed that when the convict had once looked up at Jupp, his eyes did not leave the warden's face again until the interview was over and

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Jupp said mildly to the guard on his office door: "All right. Who's next out there?"

The next might be a convict begging for the freedom of "outside work." To one such I heard Jupp say: "I don't know, Jim. I'll see. I'll talk to the boys. I'll let you know by Friday." And by "the boys" he meant the other convicts.

To another he answered, flatly: "No. I can't do it yet. I can't trust you out there, and you know it."

The prisoner repeated his appeals.

Jupp shook his head. "If I hadn't anyone to consider but myself, I might take a chance on you, but I've got to think of the rest of the boys. If I send out a man that breaks and runs, they'll all blame *me*. They'll say: 'He ought 've known better than to put a yellow dog out here with us. If he's going to play the sucker, he'll have us all in Dutch.' And that's the truth. I can't take chances. I've got to be sure."

The man begged and promised piteously.

"Nope," Jupp said. "Can't do it. Go back to your work and wait. Get any of the boys you can to come to me with a good word for you. If you have any friends anywhere, tell them to write me. Who's next out there?"

### 3

I found out, later, that Jupp craftily filed all these letters of indorsement and recommendation from the prisoner's friends and relatives in the out-

side world, and card-indexed the addresses, and used the information to trace and recapture the convict if he escaped. I noticed, too, some unconscious duplicity in his use of slang and slurred speech in his talks with the prisoners. But his basic sincerity, nevertheless, was obvious. He did really consult with "the other boys" before he "took a chance" on any prisoner. If a man on outside work showed any signs of yielding to the temptation to run away, his gangmates attended to him. If they could not stiffen him up, they reported him to Jupp and had him returned to his cell. It was not merely their loyalty to Jupp that held them; it was also their loyalty to one another, to their own interests, and to their gang spirit which Jupp worked on.

The thing seemed so simple and natural that I had continually to remind myself: "All over this country the prison system has broken down, and no one cares. It's the greatest failure of our American civilization. The prisons are run for political patronage and for contractors' profits. The prisoners are treated barbarously. They come out more criminal than they went in. Moreover, the whole criminal law is founded on the archaic idea of revenge. Men are sent to jail to be punished as criminals, not to be reclaimed from criminality. Anyone who tries to institute any sort of prison reform is accused of making criminals so comfortable in jail that they will lose their fear of imprisonment."

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ment. All the newspapers of this state are printing that charge against Jupp at this very minute. And here he is—without any public opinion to support him, without any example to encourage him—holding off the whole political plunderbund of his state while he makes his prison a hospital for the moral failures of society instead of a pest hole in which every kind of moral disease is spread and made chronic. How does he do it? Why does he do it? What is there in him that makes him want to do it and able to do it? He is the one man of his kind in a million. Why is he, miraculously, that one man?"

Of course, he himself could not tell me. People never can. The best you can do is to encourage them to "reminisce." What they recall is sometimes unimportant enough, but the fact that they recall it is frequently significant, and the emotion with which they recall it is often a key to character.

I tried to start Jupp back into his past. Had he been long in politics?

No, he had never held a political office before; he had been at the head of the Middle Western agency of a New York life-insurance company when the Governor of the state offered him the wardenship of the state penitentiary. The Governor had offered it to him because he had been helping released convicts to find jobs and get back on their feet. He had been doing that for years, "off and on," as he said.

How had he begun?

"I don't know," he answered. "Just drifted into it."

He stuck there.

I had heard—though not from him—that he had saved the Governor's youngest son from criminal associates some years before, and that the Governor had been his stanch friend ever since. When I asked him about it, he merely shook his head.

I tried another tack. "It's your theory, isn't it," I suggested, "that a prison ought to be a reformatory instead of a penitentiary—that the best way to protect society from criminals is to convert the criminals."

He rubbed the back of his bald head, worried. "Well, I don't know," he evaded me. "I'm just trying to do the best I can. We have fewer escapes this way than they had under the old system—and fewer 'repeats.' Besides, there's less trouble with the boys. It costs less to hold them than it used to. They work better, too. And by cutting down the graft the penitentiary's a lot less expensive to the taxpayer. We're really making almost an even break on the business as it stands if you figure what it'd cost the state to build the roads we've built, and what we save by raising our own food, and what the hospital would have stood us, and what we earn out of the quarry. Of course, the contractors are sore. And the unions won't let us turn out things for sale, or we could earn a profit.

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We're putting together our accounts now for our annual report. I wish you'd go over it with me if you have time. And if you've any suggestions to make——”

It was evident that I could never get anything from him by asking him questions. We talked about his annual report. He agreed that he ought to make it an official statement of some value as news, so that the papers might be tempted to print it. What he needed was publicity. If he could give the citizens of his state a fair view of what he was really doing in the penitentiary, they would surely support him against the political profiteers. We began to choose the items that looked as if they might hit the public in the eye—to arrange the report so as to star these items conspicuously—to gather them together in a brief but arresting introduction which the newspaper men would be able to quote. We ended by deciding that I ought to rewrite the whole report in a manner less dull than the official pomposity in which it was being droned out. As this was a work of composition that would probably take some days and require frequent consultations with Jupp, and since the penitentiary was three miles from the village and its Grand Hotel, I accepted his invitation to live in the warden's official residence while I was collaborating with him.

It was a little white-brick house in an orchard outside the prison walls. And when I arrived the

door was opened to me by a manservant who proved to be the beginning of my first clue to the truth about Jupp.

## 4

His name was Palin.

Palin was a lean Irishman, gray and shiftily subservient. He sniffed at me inimically until he saw my bag and guessed who I was. After that he was rather pathetic in his eagerness to please me. I supposed that he was some old political pensioner, in a linen coat, acting as domestic doorkeeper to the warden and anxious to stand well with the warden's friends.

When we were smoking, after dinner, I learned that all the servants in the house were convicts. This Palin, the butler, had been a yeggman, a sort of tramp burglar. The cook was a negro preacher who had stolen the funds of his church. The houseman, who swept the floors and made the beds and helped in the kitchen, had been guilty of larceny as an express messenger. The coachman had shot his employer in a rage—when the man refused to pay him the wages he had earned—and he was serving a life sentence.

"No," Jupp said, "we don't have any servant troubles. Do we, girl?"

His wife smiled shyly. She was much younger than he, and she had been almost as silent through dinner as a bashful child. He had married her out

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of the restaurant of a railroad station in Detroit when she was a waitress and he was traveling for the Great Lakes Fish Company, before he took to life insurance. They had no children.

"No servant troubles at all," he said. "They're all prisoners—except Pitz."

Pitz proved to be the second clue, some days later. At the moment I learned only that Pitz did the gardening and tended the chickens.

"He'll stay here as long as Palin does," Jupp said. "They're a couple of old cronies. And if Palin comes back for another term, Pitz 'll come along, too."

This had a sound of Damon and Pythias in the underworld. I had been thinking that if I could not get an article out of Jupp, I might use my opportunity to gather the raw material of some prison short stories.

"Did you notice the old fellow that cuts our grass?" Jupp asked.

I had not. Jupp told me about him.

I was admitting to myself that there was no promise of any insight into Jupp to come from his wife. She was more like a daughter to him. Her attitude of mind was obviously one of dumb, adoring acceptance, without any critical understanding of who he was or what he was trying to do in the world. He managed the house as he managed the prison. She lived there as she might have lived in the Grand Hotel, reading, playing a little on the piano, doing

fancy work. She had been living so ever since their marriage, chiefly in hotels, of course. She had a sort of faded, sickly prettiness, very touching.

When I went to bed I thought more about Pitz and Palin than about Jupp and his wife.

## 5

I was busy, most of next day, in Jupp's "den," off the dining room. It has nothing to do with the story, but I should like to describe that den—as a proof of how difficult it was to predicate anything about Jupp from his surroundings.

Its walls were covered with a crimson paper against which its carpet screamed in another tone of red and a loud design of pink roses. On a puffy plush sofa, in one corner, reposed a single fatuous-looking sofa cushion decorated with a colored portrait of a Gibson girl; and obviously no head but hers had ever reposed there. Jupp's box of stogies waited for him on a little round table with the crossed bamboo legs of a tripod, its top tacked about with ball fringe. There were two of those "American rockers" that oscillate curtly on stationary platforms. An empty office desk stood beside the countrified lace curtains of a window that looked out on apple trees and a chicken run. Everything was new, clean, very plushy, much befringed and fancy-worked, and brazenly self-righteous with the air having been bought from a Chicago mail-

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order catalogue. In this room, of an evening, after his wife had gone to bed, Jupp was accustomed to sit in a rocker, the newspaper on the floor beside him, smoking a rat-tail stogie and meditating on those measures of prison reform which were so miraculous in his day and generation.

Palin gave me this picture of Jupp meditating. He gave me everything else that he knew of Jupp, in a quick, shallow stream of eager information, as soon as he understood that I was "writing up" the warden for a New York magazine. But in spite of all his praise and confessed admiration of Jupp, he failed to conceal a feeling of his own superiority—the superiority which a tramp feels for a housed and restricted citizen, the superiority of the completely unmoral maverick for the conventional soul who is restrained by the accepted fences. I listened to what he had to say, though I had, of course, no intention of using it. I would not print anything about Jupp without first letting him read it. And Palin told me chiefly things that Jupp would not care to see in print.

Jupp and he had been boys together on the streets of Brooklyn. (I made no notes at the time, so I cannot give dates and addresses.) Jupp's father, he said, had been an English sailorman who "went off on a ship, one day, an' fergot the way home, I guess." His mother was some sort of foreigner—"a Swede, mebbe. Anyway, she was a hell-cat." She used to beat the boy over the head

with a stick. "I mind he come to school onc't with bruises on his skull the size of a baseball."

Why had she beaten him?

"He'd snuk off with the gang after school, 'stead o' makin' a bee line fer home. She didn't want him runnin' with us."

Why not?

"We wasn't teachin' him his Sunday-school lessons, I guess."

She was a Lutheran, apparently. "We was mostly Dogans," Palin explained.

Jupp became the butt of the other boys. "He c'u'dn't fight fer a cent. When you hit 'm he'd shut his eyes. His name was funny—Jimmy Jupp." They had a rhyme they used to call after him on the streets:

"Jimmy Jupp,  
The sailor's pup,  
Lost his 'fadder'  
An' got ——d up."

"He ust to say 'fadder,' like a Swede, when he was a kid.

"She made him work Saturdays fer a baker, deliverin', till he got fired 'cause we'd trip him up an' spill his buns, an' run with what we c'u'd grab. After that he worked fer a kike that had a dry-goods store. Cash boy er somethin'. She ust to go round an' collec' his wages, fer fear we'd snatch 'em from 'm on the way home."

Palin must have been flattered by my interest;

he talked for an hour, standing. And he was more than interesting; he was lambently illuminating. He made it plain that Jupp, a meekly honest and inoffensive boy, had been forced to feel himself a sort of illegitimate and ridiculous outcast. We know now that such a lesson, learned in childhood, persists for a lifetime as a hidden influence in that dark background of character which we call the subconscious mind. Consequently, Jupp's habitual silence would be the silence of timidity. He could not talk about himself, because—no matter what his achievement, his success, his reward in praise and public notice—his conviction of shameful inferiority would remain untouched and still unconsciously determinative. Out of his own young suffering he had learned to identify himself with misery, so that he would automatically sympathize with guilt and ostracism; but he would not understand the source of his sympathy, and he would be unable to express that sympathy except in his unconscious actions, because he would unknowingly expect ridicule and misunderstanding from anyone who approached him. So, instead of admitting that he was trying to protect and reclaim his persecuted convicts he would maintain that he was acting in the interests of the taxpayer and trying merely to put his prison on "a paying basis." In his talks with the convicts—though he would unconsciously identify himself with them by his manner of speech—he would be guardedly matter-of-fact

and businesslike. They would see through him; they would "get" him at once, as if intuitively. I would not. I would need a cur like poor Palin to explain him to me.

"Palin," I asked, "how did he ever become interested in this business of helping cons?"

"Search me," Palin grinned. "It's a good graft, just the same. Jupp's all right, but he's no fool. Take it from me."

"No," I said, "I can see he's no fool, but I'm not so sure about *you*. How did you happen to come together out here?"

Palin held his green-toothed grin, unabashed, "I'm no fool, neither, but I'm unlucky. They caught me with the goods an' slapped me in here fer ten years. I was doin' time inside when Jupp got his job here."

"And this friend of yours, Pitz?"

"Oh, we sent fer Pitz. He's an' ol' side partner o' mine. We ust to run together."

"What was his line? Safe cracking, too?"

"Naw." Palin was superior again. "He's just a mut. He don't know how to make a livin' at nuthin'. We teached him chicken raisin' since he come here. He's just a hot-air artist."

"You mean a con man?"

"Naw. Con nuthin'! He c'u'dn't con a white hen. He thinks he's an arnachist. I ust to keep 'm when we was out together."

"And he went to jail with you?"

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"He did *not*. He went onct, back in York State, but that was Jupp's fault. It was Jupp got us pinched, fallin' down on us. That's why he's been kind o'—*you* know—lookin' after us out here." He winked despicably. "I guess he feels like he helped put us on the blink. You know, onct you've been in stir, you're marked. *You* know. The cops lay fer you."

"How did Jupp fall down on you? Tell me about it."

### 6

He told me—after he had made me promise not to speak of it to Jupp. And the way he told it, it sounded like the adventure of three furtively defiant rats. I tried to get Pitz's version of it, later, but Pitz would not talk. He was a malevolent-looking foreigner with thin black hair, a limp black mustache, and a face pitted with black spots as if it had been blown full of bird shot. He was gentle with his chickens, and they associated with him, clucking amiably—which I took to be proof of a superior spiritual clairvoyance in hens. I never saw Palin and him together; they must have fraternized only in the evenings, after their work was done.

My promise to Palin did not prohibit me from trying to get Jupp's account of the incidents that had brought him and Palin and Pitz together for the first time. And his version of the adventure came out naturally in conversation about the other

two. His story was, for me, the final explanation of everything in him that had puzzled me. Not obviously so, you understand. As he told it, it sounded like a nightmare. It was as disjointed as a nightmare. For a time, his motivation throughout was as unreal to me as the motivation of any behavior in a fantastic dream. And like a dream, it had to be interpreted.

For instance, neither Palin nor he explained how Jupp had allowed himself to be involved in the incidents, to begin with. Jupp was then working for a grocer on lower Ninth Avenue in New York City. He was out walking the deserted streets of the water front after midnight. He ran into Palin accidentally, on his way home; and after a few minutes' talk he turned back to accompany Palin to a "water-front joint," at Palin's invitation.

Observe that Palin's psychology is clear enough. He had been padding around with Pitz, in search of a dishonest penny. They saw a man—who proved to be Jupp—coming up the empty avenue, on the opposite side of the street, alone; and Palin crossed to meet him, with the intention of either begging from him, if he was sober, or picking his pockets, if he was drunk. Pitz remained on the other side of the road, to watch. Their predestined victim was walking blindly, his head down, his overcoat collar up to his ears, his hands deep in his pockets. Palin bumped into him, under a street light, as if accidentally, and knew he was sober by the sturdy way

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in which he took the impact. He stopped and turned a bewildered face to Palin, and Palin recognized him.

"Don't know me, Jimmy, uh?" he said.

Jupp did not know him—had not seen him for years. Moreover, Palin, in thin clothing, was huddled together against the cold, his hands in trousers pockets so low on his hips that he seemed to be stooping down to reach them, in a senile crouch.

"I thought he was some little old man," Jupp described it, "without any hair." Palin was just out of jail and his hair had not yet grown.

To Palin's eye, Jupp acted as if he were walking in his sleep. "When he saw who it was," Palin told me, "he looked round like he didn't know where he was, an' he says, 'Where did *you* come from?' I tol' him I was out takin' a little exercise, an' I ast him where he was headin' fer. He kind o' didn't hear me. Put his ear down to me like he was deaf an' made me say it over again. I thought he was sort o' doped er somethin'. I ast him if he was workin', an' he said, 'Yes. Over at Sutler's.' I seen he was sore at Sutler by the way he talked. An' then, after a little, I ast him to come down with me to a joint an' have a drink. An' he come along."

Palin's psychology, as I say, is clear enough. But why was Jupp so worried that he was walking the streets at midnight, like a man in a daze? And why did he accept the invitation of an evident

criminal to drink beer in a water-front thieves' resort?

Palin admitted to me that he gave this invitation because he saw that Jupp was angry at his employer, the grocer; and Palin conceived the idea of tempting Jupp to "get back" at the grocer by means of some thieves' trick in which Pitz and he might share the profits. The conversation between Palin and Jupp, under the street light, putting it together from both their versions, ran somewhat like this:

When Jupp said that he was working for Sutler, Palin sneered, "Gettin' rich, uh?"

"Rich!" Jupp snorted. "Did anyone ever get rich working for him?"

"No," said Palin. "Ner fer anybody else. *They* get rich, but *you* don't."

Jupp suddenly plucked his hand from his pocket. "That's right, by ——" he cried, with a vehement gesture that showed he had been touched on his bruise.

Palin followed up his cue. "You've found it out, have you? *You're* swift, *you* are! I got wise to that five years ago."

"And what's more," Jupp went on, "they don't pay you what you earn. He thinks because I'm on the square he can dock me anything he likes and I won't try to get back at him. It'd serve the old skin right if I ——"

"Sure, it would," Palin cut in, eagerly. "You'd be dead right. A man's either got to work fer what

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he gets er take it from some one that *does*. An' these muts don't *work* fer it—do they?—these sharks that own stores?" He jerked his head sideways at the shop fronts. "They don't work fer it, so they soak it out o' the kiyis that *do*. It makes me laugh ev'ry time I see this town. A lot o' guys slavin' to keep a lot of other guys from havin' to do anythin'. An' a lot o' cops with big sticks watchin' to see that the guys that work don't take anythin' but what the *other* guys—that *don't* work—want to give 'em." He hitched up his trousers by the waistband and cursed. "It's a bug-house game, as Pitz says."

Jupp opened his mouth, and shut it again with an effort. His mind was busy somewhere in the silence, at a distance from his tongue. It was his tongue alone that asked, at last, unexpectedly, "Where've you been?"

"I jus' got out o' Bellevue th' other day," Palin lied. "A fresh mut ga' me a tap on the koko an' cracked it. That's where they sheared me." He ran his hand up the back of his head.

Jupp nodded, but without any aspect of comprehension.

"I been hangin' out with a gang o' fullahs along down here," Palin said. "We got a sort o' joint where we get together. Come along down an' have a bowl o' suds."

"How far is it?"

"Oh, jus' the docks."

Jupp looked at the empty distance blankly. In a moment he said, "I'll go down a couple o' blocks, anyway."

This is all very well, but why was Jupp on the streets at midnight? I asked him that question, and he said he had had insomnia. What had given him insomnia? Well, worrying about Sutler. There were two clerks in Sutler's shop; some groceries had been stolen, and Sutler had taken half the value of the missing goods out of Jupp's wages, although there was no proof that either of the clerks was the thief. This, according to Jupp, had infuriated him. The other clerk was a mere girl, a niece of Sutler's wife, and Jupp was sure that Sutler had only pretended to dock *her*. He believed that Sutler had exaggerated the value of the stolen groceries and taken all their actual value out of *his* pay.

Would that seem a convincing reason to you for Jupp's behavior? Would it, if you were trying to do a "soul portrait" of Jupp? Here was a timid boy, used to injustice, brutally trained in honesty, and beaten as a child for associating with this very Palin whom he was now accompanying to a disreputable resort. Would Sutler's injustice have driven him to fraternize with such a jailbird as Palin? Would mere injustice have put him out on the streets, like a man walking in his sleep, and ready to burst out with a threat to "get back" at

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Sutler by—by what? Obviously, by stealing from him!

No. It came to me more and more strongly the more I thought of it. Jupp's insomnia had been the insomnia of guilt. He had already "got back" at Sutler. Suspected of stealing, and unjustly fined for stealing, he had revenged himself by taking out of Sutler's till, dollar by dollar, the amount that Sutler had fined him. That amount was twenty dollars, as I discovered from a significant discrepancy between Jupp's story and the account that Palin gave me. And I am convinced that this twenty dollars, in one-dollar bills, was clasped in Jupp's hand, in his overcoat pocket, when Palin bumped into him under the street light.

Now, if I know anything about a man like Jupp, as long as he was stealing he would allow himself to feel no sense of guilt. None whatever. Contrary to all the moralists, he would be conscious only of the emotions of a timid soul in revolt, who throws off an oppression and is vindicated to himself as a man of spirit by that act. He would feel no shame before Sutler; he would feel only a defiant contempt for the man who had tried to take advantage of him and had overreached himself. The little roll of bills in an inner pocket would be a constant reminder of exultation; he would count them over every night with a sort of fierce joy; and he would waken to the thought of them every morning, resolutely.

But as soon as the appointed sum had been com-

pleted, and the money transferred to an outer pocket, the glow of this excitement would begin to fade. A dozen times a day he would find it necessary to prove to himself that he had not done anything dishonest; and though he convinced himself each time, he would find, to his bewilderment, that he did not remain convinced. He would feel the need of getting the support of some other person's assurance of his innocence—and then he would see that everyone but himself would consider him guilty beyond argument. The law, if it found him out, would shut him up in a prison among thieves. If he told his mother, she would make him return the money and declare himself ashamed and sorry for what he had done. And he was not ashamed! And he was not sorry! If the law did not prevent Sutler from taking twenty dollars from *him*, what right had it to prevent him from taking the money from Sutler? It was all a conspiracy to protect Sutler, while Sutler took advantage of his power to steal from *him*. Everyone who considered him a thief was either the dupe or the partner of this game against him.

And wandering about the streets, fighting out this endless inner argument with himself, he had run into Palin; and Palin had at once said, in effect: "Sure! You're dead right. They're all in a game against you. I understand. I been through it." And Jupp, fascinated, supported against the accusation of guilt that was hounding him, would be

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unable to turn away from Palin. And when Palin invited him to come to some "joint" that Jupp knew would be disreputable, he would hesitate, and look at the vacant nightmare streets through which he had been wandering alone; and he would say, "Well, I'll go down a couple o' blocks, anyway."

That is my theory, at least, of what happened. And it has the merit not only of accounting for the beginning of the adventure; it explains Jupp's conduct through the exciting incidents that followed; and it makes understandable the emotion in which he ended and the extraordinary spiritual effect of the whole affair on him in after life.

### 8

In any case, they went down toward the water front together, Jupp mute and absent-minded, and Palin talking as if he were afraid that silence might break the charm of his influence over Jupp. He was depending on Pitz and alcohol to complete the criminal seduction of the grocer's clerk, and Pitz was following them, on the other side of the street; but Palin, having said nothing about his confederate, could not now call him in without danger of arousing suspicion. He planned to wait until he had Jupp at a saloon table before he gave Pitz the sign to join them.

They were nearing the water front when something confusing happened.

A fat man came weaving drunkenly toward them, his coat and overcoat unbuttoned, his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, sucking in and puffing out cold air through the stem of a pipe from which he had lost the bowl. Jupp did not notice him, but Palin edged off and passed him between Jupp and himself; and at the instant of passing, unknown to Jupp, he shouldered the staggerer from his balance and threw him against Jupp. Jupp caught him to save him from falling. Palin helped. The man struggled, was rolled around between the two, lost his hat and his pipe stem, and had his coat twisted about him amazingly in his efforts to extricate himself from their attempts to keep him steady. When they finally got him put to rights they left him cursing them, and went on.

Palin began to talk again, feverishly. "You want to hear this fullah Pitz. I ain't no arnachist, neither, but I got a right to live without bein' worked to death by a lot o' bloated muts that 're too fat to work fer themselves. Pitz——" He glanced behind him. He dropped his voice. "Go on down this street, Jim, to the water front an' turn south. I'll meet you a couple o' streets down. I want to see a fullah——"

He nodded, turned the corner, and made off before Jupp could speak.

Jupp came out of his trance to find himself deserted. He went automatically almost as far as the next corner; then, his original hesitation reas-

serting itself, he decided to turn north and go home, instead of turning south to rejoin Palin. With that decision, he thrust his hands deeper into his overcoat pockets and found what proved to be, when he drew it out, a silver watch! He put his hand into his pocket again and took out—a wallet! He looked at them stupidly. He looked around him, stupidly, for Palin. He saw at a distance behind him the drunken man whom Palin and he had bumped into; and this man, under a street light, had taken off his overcoat and was searching it for something that he had lost, obviously. And the significance of this sight reached Jupp's bewildered apprehension at the same moment that he saw a stranger on the opposite side of the street, watching him.

The stranger, of course, was Pitz. Palin, having “rolled the rummy” deftly, had slipped the watch and the wallet into Jupp’s pocket and fled when he saw that the drunken man had missed them. And he had left Pitz to watch the innocent repository of the loot.

Now I do not wish to split any psychological hairs, but if Jupp had not been already feeling guilty, would he not have taken the stolen things to the nearest policemen and cleared himself?—even if he had to deny that he knew who Palin was, in order to protect *him*. Well, the thought does not seem to have occurred to Jupp at all. He tried to get away into a side street where he might drop the things into a gutter unobserved. And, of course, he

was followed by Pitz. Jupp quickened his pace when their drunken victim raised a drunken shout behind him; and when Pitz quickened, too, Jupp supposed that Pitz was a plain-clothes man who was shadowing him. He had turned north, toward home. A policeman began to sound the alarm with his nightstick; and this ringing tattoo, answered by another policeman ahead of him somewhere, stopped him, weak in the knees. With an effort to simulate innocence, he turned to look back at the pursuit, and when Pitz overtook him he asked, faintly, "What's the matter back there?"

Pitz glared at him with a baleful contempt. "Where d'you think you're goin'?"

"Home," Jupp gasped.

"You go down where you were tol' to go," Pitz said. "Go on!"

Jupp went, down the side street toward the water front again, and Pitz crossed the road and followed on the opposite side. Jupp, of course, took it for granted that he was now practically under arrest. He supposed that the detective had guessed that he had a rendezvous with Palin and intended to gather them both in together.

## 9

I asked, "Why didn't you tell him the truth?" He shook his head. "I didn't think of it."

"What *did* you think of?"

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He was sitting with one leg tucked under him, a stogie in the puckered center of his lips, swaying thoughtfully in his American rocker, like one of those Chinese figurines that nod the head.

He replied, queerly, "I was thinking that when I was a kid and used to go to work in a drygoods store, my mother used to give me a bottle of tea to take in my lunch box, and I used to put the bottle between the blankets on a shelf at the back of the store, to keep it warm, like it was a boy in bed."

I could make nothing of it. He said it with a funny sort of wistfulness, his eyes fixed on nothing. I was puzzled.

"What made you think of that?"

"I don't know. Maybe I was thirsty." He smiled apologetically.

I pretended that I was curious to identify the exact spot on the water front where this had happened. He could not remember. He recalled that he had seen a squad of street cleaners, in white, brushing out the dust from the crevices between the cobblestones, and that the wind sent this dust smoking down the empty thoroughfare from their brooms. He recalled, too, that in the silence of the night the throbbing of steam from the ocean liners, hidden behind the "housework" of the piers, set the air beating like a pulse. Both of these are recollections of irrelevant things unforgetably perceived, under a great strain of emotion, by a divided mind that is trying to interest itself in externals in order

to escape the unendurable strain of its thoughts. What thought was Jupp trying to suppress? The thought of his guilt, I should say, undoubtedly, and of the accidental justice of his punishment.

When Pitz and he came to the water front, Pitz had to follow directly behind him, because there is no sidewalk on the opposite side of the street, only wharf sheds. They had walked down almost to the next street corner when Jupp heard a low hiss beside him, and Palin caught him by the elbow and drew him into a doorway that he was passing. "There's a cop around the corner," he whispered.

**Palin! It was Palin!**

At once, in a despairing eagerness, Jupp thrust into Palin's hands the watch, the wallet, and a roll of bills. (And here was the significant discrepancy that I have referred to. Jupp, in his account, never mentioned those guilty bills as separate from the single dollar that was found in the purse.)

"Hullo!" Palin said. "Where'd the wad come from? Out o' the wallet?"

Before Jupp could answer, Pitz shoved in between them. "Hol' on, now," he growled. "I'm in on this."

"All right, Pittsey," Palin whispered. "Keep yer shirt on."

"What!" Jupp choked. "Is *that*—Is *he*——?"

"Sure," Palin said. "This 's the fullah I tol' y' about. This 's Pitz."

Jupp turned without a word, with no more than a

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blind gesture of dismissal, and retreated to the sidewalk. He was out of it! He was free! He began to giggle hysterically. And he was still giggling when he walked into the grasp of a policeman, who asked, "What were you doin' in *there*?"

### 10

Jupp shook his head. He could not answer. He could not think.

"Uh?" the policeman asked.

He had begun to tremble. The policeman took him by the arm and led him back to the doorway. And Pitz and Palin dashed out at them, tripped the officer in a sudden scuffle that freed Jupp, and fled around the corner, with Jupp running frantically after them.

Why did he run?

"I'll be darned if I know," he said. "It wasn't me. It was my legs. They just ran away with me." (The automatic flight of instinctive guilt, in fact!)

A shot sounded behind him. Something stung him on the ear. He clapped his hand to his head and knocked off his hat. He did not stop to pick it up. He dashed into an open doorway after Palin, and bounded up a dark staircase, and ran along dim halls, and leaped up more stairways, and climbed a ladder to the roof. There he slipped and fell; but, without taking his eyes off Palin, he scrambled to his feet again, and when Palin disappeared over a

parapet he followed at full tilt, jumped wildly, and fell five feet to the next housetop. That fall completely "knocked the wind" out of him. Pitz and Palin were opening a roof scuttle. He lay where he had fallen beside them, till they thrust him through the opening and helped him down the ladder and let him lie gasping on the floor while they closed the trap door behind them and fastened it with a hook. Then they dragged him down the hall in the darkness, into a room, and shut and locked the door and stood listening, panting stealthily, while he writhed on the floor at their feet, his lungs struggling painfully to get breath.

Palin prodded him with a foot and warned him to keep quiet. He groaned. Pitz struck a match and blew it out. They picked him up by the feet and shoulders, carried him to a corner of the room farthest from the door, and dropped him on a mattress there. Footsteps creaked on the flat tin roof over them, came and went slowly—and passed over to the next house.

They waited in the darkness, a long time, silent. And then Pitz struck another match and lit a candle that stood, stuck in its own grease, on the table there.

The circle of candlelight fell on a disorder of books and newspapers on the table top. It showed white on the faces of the two thieves. And Jupp, drawing deep, tremulous breaths, saw that he was in a little tenement-house room, unfurnished, its single window covered with a dirty gray blanket that had

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been nailed over the sash. "Now," Pitz growled, "let's see what you got."

Palin pushed aside the papers and emptied his pockets. The watch interested him for a moment only. "Good fer three bucks," he said. The wallet had a single dirty dollar in it; he added that to the roll of bills and counted them. "Twenty-one good ones," he said, stroking them down lovingly. "Seven apiece."

Pitz clawed over his share silently.

"Here's yours, Jim," Palin said.

Jupp, lying flat on his back, rolled his head from side to side. "I don't want them."

Palin took four dollars, passed three to Pitz, and grinned, moistening his lips. But Pitz did not even notice the inequality of the division. He was glaring across the room at Jupp.

"Why don't you want them?" he demanded.

Jupp did not reply.

"Stolen, eh? Is that yer kick?"

"I've had enough," Jupp said to the ceiling. "No more of that for me."

"Now, you look-a-here!" Pitz threatened; and in a low, hoarse voice, gripping the table edge and leaning forward like an orator, he broke out in a long rigamarole of argument and self-justification to the amazed Jupp. He had worked out some sort of theory to the effect that all religion and all morality were merely what he called "camp laws of warfare." Man lived by killing birds, fish, beasts,

and plants—and eating them. And he lived by killing his enemies in war and looting them. “ ‘Thou shalt not kill’—what? The human animals in yer own camp. Kill everythin’ else that breathes! Kill yer country’s enemy an’ take all he’s got! ‘Thou shalt not steal’—from yer neighbor’s tent. Steal from birds, the beasts, from everything that lives! An’ steal all you can carry off from the tents of yer enemies. Yes! Is that right? Is that religion? I say there’s no right an’ no religion in it. An’ I defy it!”

“Aw, cut it out,” Palin grumbled.

“I defy it. I’ll not keep their camp laws. I’m against them—against them all. I’ll treat them the way they treat everything that’s too weak to fight them. I’ll take what I’m strong enough to take, no matter what tent I find it in. I’ll live like the animals they hunt—like the birds—like the rats! Yes, the rats! I’d sooner be an honest rat than one o’ these snivelin’ hypocrites—like you—like you, you coward!”

“For —— sake!” Palin blew out the light.  
“Shut up, will you. Shut up. Listen!”

There were footsteps on the stairs. These approached slowly, passed the door, and stopped as if at the ladder that led to the roof. Jupp, holding his breath, could hear a low grumble of voices and the scrape of a heavy boot.

The steps went down the stairs again. In the darkness, Palin said, hoarsely, “There’s blood on the ladder!”

“Blood!”

“They’re lookin’ downstairs.”

Pitz struck a match, shaded in the hollow of his hands. Palin rose from the floor, where he had been lying with an ear to the crack under the door. They both turned to Jupp. And the side of Jupp’s head was bloody from the wound in the tip of his ear, and his hands were bloody, and there was blood on the mattress.

Pitz held the dying match near the floor. A spot of blood glistened where Jupp had lain, just inside the doorway.

“He shot me,” Jupp said, weakly. He could see the hatred, the desperation of disgust and anger, that lowered in their faces. Then the match went out.

“We’re up the flue!” Palin said. “There’s a trail to the ladder.”

Silence.

Pitz said: “It’s up to *him*. He’s got to take the stuff an’ beat it down the fire escape. We can clean up this mess an’ get away with it.”

Palin did not reply.

“Look-a-here, you,” Pitz ordered. “There’s a fire escape outside that window. It’s up to you. You’ve got to beat it out o’ this.”

Jupp swallowed. “No,” he said, brave in the darkness. “You got me into it. You stole those things and put them in my pocket. I won’t take them, and I won’t run again as if I *had* taken them. I’m no thief and *you* know it.”

"By——!" Pitz swore, "you'll get out o' here  
er I'll throw y' out!"

"Hol' on now, Pittsey," Palin interposed.  
"Jimmy, if you stay here, you'll be caught anyway.  
They'll search the whole damn house. They'll see  
that ear. You can't hide it. The only chanct you  
got's to beat it down the fire escape."

"I won't," Jupp said. "If I got to go to jail, I'll  
go with you two that got me into this. You can't  
put it off on me again. You did that once. You  
put those things into my pocket, and I got scared  
and ran. I don't make that mistake again. I'm  
no thief. I don't care what's right or wrong.  
Say what you like. But I don't run again. Never!"

## 11

He had raised his voice. And it was this that saved him. The two policemen had found blood at the threshold of the door. They knew that the thieves were hidden in the room. They knew that there was a fire escape from the window. They pretended to go downstairs together, but one of them, creeping back, watched and listened at the door while the other went down through the basement to the yard to cover the fire escape. The one at the door heard the argument between Jupp and his companions.

Pitz, enraged, lost all caution and threatened and blustered in loud tones. Jupp refused to be intimidated. They had put those things in his pocket,

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he insisted. It was a dirty, sneaking thieves' trick. They were a pair of pickpockets and they had used him as a stall, without letting him know what they were doing. If he had been arrested, they would have let him go to jail alone. Well, if he had to go now, they would go with him.

He was interrupted by a blow on the door. It was the springing of the trap. Pitz and Palin scuttled across the room with the secret noise of two startled beasts of darkness, and Jupp heard them struggling with the window. He cowered in his corner, faint with fear and loss of blood, the floor shaking under him with the hurrying feet and the battering on the door panels.

In the confusion that followed the breaking of the door lock—the shout of voices, the flash of lights, the sound of breaking glass, the cries and curses of a hand-to-hand encounter between the policemen and the thieves who were caught at the window sill—Jupp lay against the wall, his arm over his eyes, expecting the blow of a night stick. And when the officers had dragged Pitz and Palin into the hall, and he understood that he had at least escaped the violence of the law, he lay quiet in the hope that he might be overlooked.

Some one threw a light on him. He saw a policeman standing over him.

"Your name's 'Jim,' is it?"

Jupp replied that it was.

"Jim what?"

Jupp told him.

"Where did you meet these two?"

Jupp poured out his story. The policeman listened to it, thoughtfully sucking a tooth. In the middle of it he said, "You work fer Sutler, don't you?"

Jupp admitted it.

"I thought I'd seen you somewhere. Go ahead."

When he had finished, the policeman said: "Well, you'll have to appear as a witness, anyway. Gimme yer address." As he wrote it down he remarked: "You was lucky that bullet didn't come an inch further to the right. The next time you get into a game like this you'd better stand an' take what's comin' to you."

"You're blamed right I will," Jupp said, fervently.

"All right. Run along. We'll let you know when we want you. Better go in the saloon down 't the corner an' clean that blood off."

He helped Jupp to his feet and followed him out. Jupp stumbled eagerly down the stairs. He was conscious of nothing but a sick desire to be at home in his bed.

"Where's yer hat?" the policeman asked, at the street door.

Jupp put his hand up to his bare head. "I dunno. I lost it."

"All right," the officer said, and he departed with the unemotional indifference of the man to whom this sort of thing is the routine of life.

Jupp stood a long time in the doorway. You can

imagine what he was thinking. I had to imagine it. Jupp could not tell me. All he could recall of the moment was this: as he went down the street toward the corner saloon he passed the doorway into which he had dashed with Palin, just after he had been shot in the ear; and here, on a sidewalk grating, he saw his hat. He picked it up and put it on. "Funny thing," he said to me. "That hat looked awful good."

"How do you mean?"

"I don't know. I liked it."

Now, you may think me absurd, but—that was a derby hat. It was the visible sign of his escape from criminality and the persecutions of guilt. In putting it on he put on respectability again and became a conventional citizen who could walk up the street without being noticed. The whole overwhelming emotion of his sense that he was free and unsuspected must have accepted the act of donning that hat as something symbolic and memorably significant. And there, to me, is the unconscious reason why he never wore any but a derby hat afterward. No other hats ever "looked good" on him, as he said. They never "felt good." He "liked a derby hat best."

He did not have to appear as a witness against Pitz and Palin in court. When he reached home that night he was shivering with a chill that made

him ache as if he were on a rack. Next morning he had the grippie. Two days later it was pneumonia. When he recovered, Pitz and Palin were already serving their sentences.

He did not see Palin again until, as the newly appointed warden of his penitentiary, he walked into the prison kitchen on his first visit of inspection and found Palin washing dishes there. Palin did not recognize him. He went back to his office, thought the matter over, and, as his first act of prison reform, sent for Palin and talked with him.

Apparently it was not a very fruitful talk. "You can't do anything for Palin," he said. "If people didn't train a dog, they wouldn't expect it to behave. Palin's never had any training. He's never had any proper home, any decent parents, anything at all to tie to. The only person in the world he'd ever had any feeling for, as far as I could find, was this man Pitz. He'd had a letter from Pitz. I got him to write to Pitz and bring him on here. They're all right together. Pitz 's happy here. So 's Palin."

I asked him about Pitz's anarchism.

"Oh, that's just his conscience talking," Jupp said, shrewdly, "fighting with himself. He has character, Pitz has. Palin hasn't any. But Pitz would just about kill him if he threw me down, and Palin knows it."

I wanted to say to Jupp: "You understand these men and you sympathize with them because you

## WARDEN JUPP

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were a criminal once yourself, completely self-justified, but still a criminal in the eyes of the law. That night with Pitz and Palin made you see yourself in the first ex-con who appealed to you for help, and you went on helping them until you arrived here. You have unconsciously imbibed some of Pitz's philosophy about humanity's 'camp laws.' You have no theory about crime, because your theory is so unmoral that you daren't formulate it even in your own thoughts. You merely express it in your actions. That's why you're such a mystery!"

Naturally, I said nothing of the sort. I said: "When the Governor goes out of office, do you think you'll be able to hold the job here?"

"No," he replied. "The gang 'll get me."

"And all this work of yours will go for nothing?"

He thought a long while. "I do it," he said, "because I like it. Some one will always be doing the same sort of thing, for the same reason. In time, people 'll learn it's the best way to run a prison. It takes time. It takes time. Don't worry."

He lost his prison, as he had predicted, and he never got another. He disappeared, with Pitz and Palin, in the silence that soon afterward covered all the experiments of social and political reform in the Middle West. I heard that he had gone back into life insurance; and when Warden Osborne began his reforms in the New York state penitentiary I sent some of the newspaper clippings of Osborne's fight to Jupp with a note of comment.

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## SOME DISTINGUISHED AMERICANS

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It was characteristic of Jupp that he did not trouble to reply. Later, I heard that he was dead, but I have never been able to confirm the report. And I have no idea what became of Pitz and Palin.

I did not write any “soul portrait” of Jupp—for obvious reasons. I never shall write one now, I suppose—unless this is it.

## V. PETER QUALE

"We used to say 'P. Q.' as we say 'T. R.' or 'John D.' in common consonance with that rule of use by virtue of which always we put as briefly as is humanly possible whatever it is that circumstances compel us most frequently to communicate."

—“Topics of the Times,” *New York Times*.

### I

OLD P. Q.’s life has been written many times in edifying detail, but I have never seen his death receive more than its newspaper notice. His life has been glorified as a sort of latter-day fairy tale, and told and retold for the encouragement of young American ambition; but his death has been passed over as if it were just a date in his career—the closing date, of course, but no more significant than the word “finis” at the end of the story—whereas, like many another death, it was the real test and assay of his whole life and of all the values by which he had been living.

That is why, in attempting a portrait of old P. Q., I should like to pose him finally on his back in his sickbed, staring at the plaster root of the chandelier in his ceiling, rather than sitting on the summit of his money bags, sneering down on the Common People groveling before him, as he used

to sit and sneer in the newspaper cartoons of him when McKinley was President.

As a matter of fact, outside of a caricature, old P. Q.'s nose could not be imagined in a sneer. It was not a sufficiently mobile nose to sneer with. He had a set expression. You might think it the expression of an autocratic ideal of grim impassivity. In a photograph, he always showed fierce-eyed eagle features, with his jaw firm and his mouth dangerous. And in his business encounters, among his fellow directors, or presiding at the many boards which he controlled, he faced friends and enemies alike, silent, impassive, superior, directing one of his confidential secretaries to make the notes he needed or to read aloud to the meeting the statements of the business in hand. And there was something impressive, something almost majestical, in the way he sat aloof at those conferences, in the midst of all the writing and reading and argument and consultation that went on around him, scarcely opening his lips, rarely moving his great lank bulk, until he had made his mind up. Then he shifted impatiently in his chair and leaned forward. If this movement was not enough to obtain silence, he cleared his throat. The heads turned to him; the voices ceased. He gave his decision in the meagerest words. If anyone who did not know his habits continued to argue after his conclusion had been announced, he merely waited in silence, with his eyes elsewhere, until it dawned on the stranger

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that the matter had been disposed of. Then, at a nod, one of his prime ministers took up the next item on the order of the day. He adjourned the meeting by rising and leaving the table; the necessary motion of adjournment was put after he had gone.

All this had a fine look of autocracy. It was not autocracy alone. It was the mask of infirmity—the hussar dolman and the big sword that concealed the weakness of the Kaiser's withered arm.

I got my first suspicion of that from his youngest son, Robert Quale, whom we called "Bob White" at college.

Bob had a portrait of his father on the mantelpiece of his room, in the center of a chorus of photographs of stage beauties. The old man looked especially fierce and domineering in that blandishing company. Bob grinned at his dad's glare. "Scared of the camera," he said. "Trying to intimidate it. He does it with everyone he meets. Funny how he gets away with it." He straightened up the picture affectionately. "He's like an old dog guarding his doorstep and bristling at everyone who has to come to his front porch."

That was not the popular idea of Peter Quale. Scared? Bristling? On his guard?

What was he on his guard against?

Well, for one thing, "the old pirate," as Bob called him, had never had much education. In fact, to confess the incredible truth, he could hardly more than write his name presentably; and wherever

## SOME DISTINGUISHED AMERICANS

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possible he signed only his initials. (The *New York Times* notwithstanding, this was the origin, I take it, of the universal shortening of his name to "P. Q."). His handwriting was clumsy, childish, faltering. His spelling was disgraceful. He read like a schoolboy. Hence the confidential secretaries, and the prime ministers who acted as chairmen, and the royal aloofness from the petty details of reports and documents and the wording of motions and the making of notes.

It struck me as one of those behind-the-scenes facts of life that seem so illuminating to adolescence. It interested me permanently in old P. Q., flattering me with a sense of superior knowledge whenever I saw him cartooned, or editorially attacked, or eulogized in a magazine series of "Great American Fortunes." Many of his associates must have known his little secret, yet it was never put in print so far as I saw, and none of his biographers betrayed it. I felt that I was "on to" something about him that vaguely explained qualities of his which imposed on everybody else. And I still think that it accounts for his miraculous memory, which was infallible for the smallest details, because it had never been weakened by dependence on memoranda. And it accounts for his large mental grasp of very complicated undertakings, because he saw them not in reported words and persuasive arguments, but in the concrete facts which the words might cloud and the arguments misinterpret. And it

## PETER QUALE

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accounts for his ability to carry all his business always in his head, and to go over it endlessly at his leisure, in the otherwise unoccupied silence in which he seemed to pass his life.

### 2

At any rate, as I say, it interested me permanently in old P. Q. and in Bob's gossip about him. The psychology of Bob's fondness for talking of him I did not understand. Bob seemed cheerfully disparaging and yet contemptuously proud of his dad. He was apparently puzzled by the old man, curious about him, and in some way inimical to him. It was an odd attitude for a son. And he told odd things about his father, among them one thing that seemed unimportant enough at the time, though I should consider it, now, as essential to a portrait of P. Q. as the eyes in his head.

He had arrived in New York, on an immigrant ship from the north of Ireland, sometime during the famine of 1845-48. And he arrived alone, fatherless and motherless, a small boy in a strange world. His father, dying of what was called "ship fever," had been buried at sea. The mother, it was understood, had died in the old country.

He went to work as a stable boy in the barns of a water-front trucking company. He was big and strong for his age, and in a few years he was driving a truck himself. He must have looked like a young

charioteer at the reins, tall, square-shouldered, well balanced on his feet. He had that air even in his old age.

Out of his savings he soon bought a team of horses and a wagon, and began hauling dirt from excavations. Next thing, he was taking contracts for such work, with gangs of men and trains of wagons under his orders. Then he became a building contractor. He bought land and he erected houses. He owned an office building. He laid street-car lines and took part payment in company bonds. He laid gas pipes and mains, and held a mortgage on a gas company. When the early gas wars ended he owned a controlling interest in the consolidation. He became a traction magnate by a similar process of acquiring liens on the actual properties of the street railways while speculators made and lost fortunes in the stocks. He never speculated, but whenever a traction company went into bankruptcy and was reorganized, it was found that he owned its real assets. He was busy, in that way, all through the Civil War and the Reconstruction period and the various booms and panics that came and went for twenty years after. Nothing but an earthquake could have shaken his financial stability. His fortune was all bricks and stones and steel and mortar and pipes and rails.

"Queer old bird," Bob said once. "He knows the price of everything that you can handle. The master bought a water pitcher once—very showy—and asked him what he thought it had cost, when it came on

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the table. He took it up and looked at it and put it down. ‘Thirty-seven cents,’ he said. And she was furious. She thought there must be a price mark on it. There wasn’t. It had cost thirty-seven cents, but she thought it looked like five dollars at least.”

I suggested that he had learned values from the hardships of his youth.

“Hardships nothing,” Bob said. “That stuff about the penniless barefooted Irish boy is all buncombe. When he landed in this country, one of the first things he did was to bank a hundred pounds that he had in his pocket.”

“A hundred pounds! Five hundred dollars?”

“Yes, and he never drew any of it out. He began adding to it right away, and he’s been adding to it ever since.”

“Where did he get it?”

“Search me. And another thing. He’s not Irish. Quale is a Manx name. I told him so once, playing checkers with him, and I saw that he knew it. He looked fussed. If he came from the north of Ireland, I’m a Pomeranian. I tried to make him talk about Ireland, one night, and he just growled that he didn’t remember anything about it. He remembers something or other that he doesn’t want to talk about.”

It seemed natural to me that a man in P. Q.’s position should not care to talk about his origin. I was more interested in Bob’s account of how they played checkers together. The mighty P. Q. brooding over a checkerboard! Here was an aspect of

greatness that made even the caricatures of the cartoonists look stilted. "Samson struggling with a match box."

He played checkers at night because he read so laboredly, and he had never been a great theater-goer, and he considered chess a waste of intellect, and he had some antiquated moral feeling against cards as the implements of improvidence. His moral feeling, however, did not prevent him from cheating at checkers if he were not watched.

"He'll steal one of your kings off the board if you're winning," Bob said, "and most people are so afraid of him they'll let him do it. He doesn't do it with me. The first time I caught him at it, I said: 'Here! You've sneaked one of my kings off!'

"He glared at me. 'Sneaked! Sneaked!'

"'Yes,' I said, 'you've taken it off that king row. You put it back.'

"He tried to bluff me out of it, growling and snapping at me. I put it back myself. 'It was there,' I said, 'and I remember it was there. Go ahead. It's your move.'

"He said something about having 'brushed it off by accident, maybe,' and I let it go at that, but I knew he'd taken it off purposely, because, after a little while his lips began to twitch. That's about as near as he ever gets to a smile."

I doubted that story. Bob was not a brilliant student. I did not suppose that it would be necessary for one of the omnipotent directing minds of

Manhattan to steal men off the checkerboard in order to beat him.

Bob explained: "Did you ever see an old book called *The American Draught Player*, written by a man named Spayth? No? Well, all the possible games on a checkerboard are worked out in it from the very first move. If you learn off a few games like 'Single Corner' and 'Old Fourteenth,' it's practically impossible to beat you. I found that book years ago, in a second-hand store on Twenty-third Street, and I began learning the games by heart, until now I can lick the old man whenever I want to, and when I don't want to I can make the game a draw. He will stick at it sometimes till three in the morning, trying to come out a game ahead of me, but I never let him."

"Why not?"

"If he had his way I'd never be able to call my soul my own. He does it to everybody except me. That's why I never ask him for money. I get it from the mater. I won't let him buy me and I won't let him scare me. And I'm able to get along with him better than anybody. If I let him beat me at checkers, he'd soon be treating me the way he does all the rest."

3

Perhaps I should explain that Bob, having been expelled from a number of preparatory schools in the States, had been exiled to Upper Canada College

in Toronto, with some idea of getting him away from evil associates, I suppose. He had either conformed to Canadian discipline or he had hoodwinked it, and he had been graduated into Toronto University, though without honors, as a special student. It was in the university lecture rooms that I first met him—a small, black-haired youth, quick in his gestures and swiftly contemptuous in his speech. He did not belong to the sporting ring in Residence, for several obvious reasons: he was on very short allowance from his mother, so that he could not keep pace with the expenditures of the college bloods; he had no physical capacity for athletics and no congenial interest in them to make him at his ease with the Residence coterie; and finally, he seemed much older in his mind than any of us and regarded the dissipations of our moneyed students as rather childish. “Cutting their milk teeth on beer bottles,” he said. He did not conceal his superior sophistication. They retaliated by calling him “the Cold Bird,” and “Young Tenderloin” and “Little Punksticks” because he smoked cigarettes incessantly—Egyptian cigarettes.

On the other hand, he was equally alien to the studious college “plugs.” He attended lectures irregularly and failed in his examinations. What knowledge he acquired he seemed to get by some process of occult absorption. He played a piano in his room when he should have been studying, and he was a connoisseur in musical comedies. Common

report credited him with being idly dissipated, and he disappeared sometimes for days; but he had no confidants in his dissipations, so that he could not be accused of setting a bad example; and the authorities blinked at his absences.

We became friends as a result of mere propinquity. In many of the classes the students were assigned seats alphabetically, and when there were no "P's" to come between us, he sat beside me. He was interesting—totally unlike a Canadian boy—and appealing in his friendless independence. We got into the habit of spending our evenings together.

I did not begin to understand him until I saw him in his home, on an Easter visit to New York; and then it became obvious that his attitude to his father was due to the circumstance that there were two factions in the family and Bob was of his mother's party. He was fifteen or twenty years younger than either of his two married brothers, John Quale, who was in Wall street, and Paul Arbuthnot Quale, who acted as his father's deputy in charge of the Quale real estate. These two had their own homes and their own interests. They came on Sunday evenings, with their wives, to the old house off Gramercy Park, and the wives chatted with each other and with Mrs. Quale—chiefly about their children—but the men were mostly silent. They seemed completely indifferent to Bob, and he to them. I had never seen brothers show so little mutual interest or affection.

John, born in the early days of his father's for-

tune, had been sent to a business college. He had made an independent career for himself in speculative finance. Paul had gone through a sectarian college and come out with a strong sense of the moral power of money in support of revealed religion. Neither of them smoked or drank or enjoyed any convivial vices. Bob was undoubtedly an unconscious protest against them. He had been his mother's child; she had refused to let P. Q. dictate his upbringing, and she had tried to educate him "like a gentleman." I don't know whether she thought she had succeeded. To the others of the family, of course, his habits were a scandal. He had long since shown his brothers that they could not manage him. They ignored him, therefore.

The house was a large, double house, of which Mrs. Quale occupied one half and her husband the other. Bob had an upper floor to himself, on her side of the establishment, with a billiard room that had once been a nursery, and a large sitting room with shelves of books which he never opened, and a grand piano. His mother sat there with us one evening while he played restlessly; but for the most part we were left to our own amusements. She had evidently learned that her affectionate anxiety grated on him and she concealed it from him.

"You will look after him?" she said to me, hastily, while I was waiting for him in the hall, one evening. "I'm glad you like him." And she added, almost in a guilty whisper, "He's a dear boy."

## PETER QUALE

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She was still a handsome woman, younger than her husband, but with a nervously apprehensive manner and a painful mouth. (The expression of that mouth made me sympathize with Bob's feeling toward his father.) Her time appeared to be wholly occupied with household matters and the meetings of some few boards of charitable aid. The house was spotlessly efficient, though old-fashioned. Affairs of house cleaning or redecoration or repair were going on in some corner of it always, under her supervision. I thought her tragically commonplace.

I saw about the house only one thing that seemed characteristic of old P. Q. That was an antique framed motto in early English black letter on his library wall. There was a legend that it had been given to him by J. P. Morgan, but I suspect that he treasured it for the sentiment as much as for the association. It read:

A secret that is known to one—  
A secret known to God alone.  
A secret that is known to two—  
A secret known to God knows who.

I should say it might have been engraved on P. Q.'s upper lip.

He was out of town when Bob and I arrived; and when he returned he was absorbed in office routine and board meetings and business luncheons and directors' dinners and evening conferences of one sort or another. He breakfasted before we were out

of bed, and he walked early to his office—in the old gas building on Union Square—with a secretary who brought him his mail and telegrams at seven. He carried a heavy walking stick because he had once been attacked on the street, and he limped from a twinge of rheumatism in the knee, on the morning that I saw him, but his carriage was otherwise erect and forceful, and the defiant poise of his head and shoulders was accentuated by the rakish angle at which he wore a soft hat slanted down on his eyebrows. Even at a distance you would know he was “a character.”

We had one dinner with him—a formal family dinner given to some financiers whose names I have forgotten. Among them there was a Londoner who represented a group of British investors. As we went in to the table Bob whispered to me that this man had arrived wearing a monocle, and old P. Q. had growled at him, “I can’t talk to you with that damn thing in your eye.” And the Englishman had been so surprised that the glass had dropped from his eye socket and he had not put it back. He looked rather bewildered throughout the meal, either because of his reception or because the lack of the monocle affected his sight.

The others had an air of suppressed amusement. P. Q. was dour and silent. It appeared that he had been to Washington, on some business about a bill in the Senate which he wished to have passed. It had been passed. The men at the table, congratu-

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lating him on his success, asked him what arguments he had used. "Arguments!" he grumbled. "They knew all the arguments. Been listening to arguments for a month. I hadn't any arguments. I just damned it through."

The others accepted the opportunity to relieve the laughter which they had been restraining. The Englishman seemed more bewildered than ever. P. Q. looked up, blinking against a puckered twinkle of the eyes. For a moment I thought that he was going to smile. I said so, under my voice, to Bob. He nodded sourly. "He's getting old," he muttered. "Losing his self-control."

His mother shook her head at him. The others sat too far away to hear. The table was unnecessarily large, in a room so vast that the shaded candlelight did not more than reach the walls. It was a warm spring; the house was overheated; and the French windows of the dining room had been opened upon a balcony. With the night air drawing in on us, and the candlelight scarcely showing the high ceiling, I felt as if we were eating outdoors on a cloudy night.

The talk at the upper end of the table ran into a discussion of the attacks that were being made by politicians and newspapers upon the owners of public utilities. I listened with a divided mind, trying to picture to myself what life must look like to the old nabob at the head of the board. A large map of the city hung in his library, with his real-estate holdings marked on it in red, and his street

railways crawling over it in blue, and his gas pipes wriggling through it in yellow, and patches of his docks and car barns and gas tanks all over it. I had been wandering around town with Bob—who was showing me the sights—and I could visualize many of these colored lines and patches in terms of buildings and constructions. How did it feel to live in a city that for more than half a century you had been erecting as you would a house? How would you feel toward the successive generations of tenants who leased the house from you, and paid you rent, and complained of exactions and inconveniences, and now suddenly began to talk as if it was, after all, *their* house to which your title was in part no more than “a public utility franchise”?

I judged that you would feel as contemptuously indifferent to the talk as old P. Q.’s silence indicated *he* felt while he ate and listened to the men before him. Generations of tenants had passed through his streets and houses as passengers got on and off his cars. He and the houses and the cars and the rails remained. He must feel as permanent and solid as his properties. And as secure.

I began imagining myself in P. Q.’s position, at the head of his table, owning his fortune, enjoying his security. It was a mighty proud and comfortable feeling of solid permanence founded on brick and stone and metal. It was more than a sense of wealth and power. I felt (in the person of P. Q.) that if I had wanted merely wealth, I should have

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speculated and bought stocks and not confined my holdings entirely to tangible assets of material construction. And if I had been ambitious for distinction and power, I should have educated myself to take my place among cultivated people, and put on a silk hat, and been undisturbed before a monocle. No. What I had needed was security—from that very first day when I landed friendless at Castle Garden and hastened to put my five hundred dollars in the bank.

Security. Security from what?

And then I remembered Bob saying that his father had arrived in New York with something in his past that he wouldn't talk about; and I saw myself guiltily banking my five hundred, and silently entrenching myself in the ownership of land and houses, and building a shell of property around myself, confiding in no one, talking as little as possible, afraid of people, trying to intimidate them because I *was* afraid of them, and bristling like an old dog on the doorstep of my personality, on my guard against any intrusion, even an affectionate intrusion, so that even my wife —

I must have been staring at old P. Q. with an expression of hypnotized clairvoyance, for when he looked down the table and saw me he frowned, and then focused on me a queer, startled glare. It was a look that lasted only an instant before I came to myself and caught up my fork and busied myself with my food. But during that instant I must have confronted him with the eyes of astounded speculation.

Bob had not noticed my expression, but he saw his father's. "What were you doing?" he whispered. "Making faces at him?"

I pretended that I didn't know. "I may have been," I said. "I was looking at him and thinking of something else."

He giggled. "You'll be sticking out your tongue at him next."

He told his mother that I had "made a snoot" at the old man, and he stuck to his story, snickering hysterically, in the face of her distress. It was a feeble enough joke, and his pleasure in it probably came as much from my embarrassment as from the fact that he was tickling his own desire to cheek his father. He invented an excuse for me. He said that as a loyal Colonial I resented his dad's insult to the British monocle. Throughout the rest of the dinner he continued snorting and choking to himself. When we got to his room he laughed uproariously, helpless when I pummeled him, and wiping his eyes weakly between his convulsions. It was good to see him laugh.

The incident seemed insignificant at the time. It had its consequences.

### 4

That same evening something else occurred that might have interested P. Q. more than my uncomplimentary conception of his psychology—if he had known of either.

## PETER QUALE

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Bob had bought tickets for "a show," a musical comedy, if I remember, at the old Manhattan Theater on Broadway. We arrived late, and it was not till after the end of the first act that we found the name of Angela Quayle in the cast. It caught Bob's eye, of course. And during the second act we amused ourselves trying to decide which of the chorus Angela Quayle might be. We got no clue.

There was a red-headed soprano who had a small part among the principals. "I used to know her," Bob volunteered. (Her name was Dolly something or other—Dolly Varley, let us say.) At the end of the act, he said: "I'm going to find out from her which is Angela Quayle. Wait here a minute."

The third act was well under way before he returned, and he had not only found out which was Angela Quayle; he had invited her and Dolly Varley to supper after the theater. I felt very much the young man about town. He whispered: "I told them you were a Canadian playwright down here seeing the managers. You'll have to live up to that." It was a part that rather went to my head.

Angela Quayle proved to be a tall, dark girl, graceful and demure. She did not try to see us across the footlights, but Dolly Varley found us in the third row, and smiled at Bob, and then took me in with an absent-minded scrutiny while she sang. I strove to look unconscious of my importance, and still look important. I think I failed.

Fortunately for the professional standing of  
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Canadian playwrights, Bob knew the etiquette of stage doors and the passport for doorkeepers; and we met the girls conveniently, at the foot of the dressing-room stairs, in the wings of a stripped stage; and they did not ask the names of any of the managers whom I had been seeing. They were not interested in me at all, in fact. Before the affair was ended, I understood thoroughly that a provincial dramatic author, quite unproduced, was not a prize behind the scenes—certainly not when he was in social competition with an heir of the Quale millions.

Dolly Varley proved to be older than she had looked in her stage role, and both she and Angela were quietly dressed and matter-of-fact in manner. They confessed to being hungry, and voted to go to a neighboring rathskeller for something hearty to eat. The expedition rapidly lost the air of an adventure. They behaved as sedately as any two intelligent girls who earn their own livings and are economically independent of the need of coquetry. I began to see that I had been deceived by the traditions of fiction in the matter of actresses.

And I began to see, too, that Bob had arranged the party not merely for his amusement or mine. He wanted to know where Angela Quayle had come by her name. Was it a stage name only?

Well, her real name was Angela Priestly, but Quayle was her mother's maiden name.

Where had they come from?

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Her mother had come from England, but she had married in this country.

He began to show some excitement. "Isn't she Manx? Didn't she come from the Isle of Man?"

Why?

"Well," Bob said, "if she did, I'll bet you're relatives of ours."

She smiled at his seriousness. "It wouldn't do me any good if we *were*, would it?"

"Yes," he answered, unexpectedly. "It might. Find out for me, will you? I mean it."

"Oh, very well," she said.

She made no more of it than that, and I did not hear Bob refer to the matter again; but when we had taken the girls to their addresses and we were driving home together in a hansom—which was Bob's constant ideal of bachelor luxury—I asked him whether he really thought she might be a relative; and he said: "I don't know. I hope so. I like her. Don't you?"

I liked her well enough.

"Rotten shame," he said, "a girl like that working in the chorus. I'll bet she's had a tough time."

I regretted he'd told her I was a playwright.

Why?

"Why! Because she's been as silent about it as if you'd told her—I don't know *what!*"

Bob laughed. "She was probably afraid you'd pull a manuscript out of your pocket and try to read her a first act."

It seemed to him a good joke. When he saw that

I was really surly about it, he promised, "The next time I see her I'll tell her the truth."

And that incident had its consequences, also.

## 5

He did not see her again during my visit, and he said nothing about her when he rejoined me in our classes at the university. If I knew that he was corresponding with her, it made so little impression on me that I have forgotten it. I was busy trying to prepare myself for the approaching doomsday of examinations. He announced suddenly that he was done with exams, with college, with the whole silly cram that was called education. I did not connect her with his decision. I supposed that it was simply the revolt of the idle rich against intellectual labor. He was more than usually restless, impatient, contemptuous, and unhappy. He came to me in the library one sunny morning.

"Good-by," he said. "I'm going. I'm packed." And he said it loudly, so as to show his scorn for the regulations that required silence in the reading room.

Several students near us turned and hissed, "Ssh!" angrily. He invited them to mind their own driveling business, in a voice that was audible to the whole world. All the free spirits in the neighborhood accepted that as a challenge to an interchange of insults. An indignant hubbub arose. The desk clerk rapped in vain for order. I hurried

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Bob out to the hall, through a small riot of catcalls and hisses, to which he kept replying in spite of my attempts to hush him as we went. We were overtaken at the door by an angry attendant with a summons to the librarian's office. Bob replied that the librarian could go to bottomless perdition, as far as *he* was concerned, and walked out. It was not so simple a situation for me. I had an uncomfortable half hour, trying to clear myself somewhat, without putting all the blame on Bob. I escaped with a week's suspension from the privileges of the library, and I hurried off to Bob's room.

He was gone.

He wrote apologetically from the train and again when he reached New York; but I was too busy to reply, and I was still peevish about the scene in the library, and I was also glad to have him off my mind. When the exams were over I had problems of my own to face, though they were not at all the problems that would worry a millionaire's son. In the silence that came between us I got no hint of the events that were preparing.

Then he wrote, reminding me of our conversations about the impossibility of making a living as a writer in Canada, and inviting me to try a preliminary attack on New York from the hospitality of his rooms. "Have something important to tell you," he explained. "Very important. Need your advice." New York, however, had frightened me; and even when his mother wrote, obviously at his

instigation, I shivered, in reluctant refusal, and hung back.

There was another long silence. I spent part of it day dreaming scenes in which I bluffed a Park Row editor into giving me a summer try-out in his city room on the strength of the fact that I had written verses for the college paper—some of which the paper had published. I did not succeed in making the scenes quite credible. Bob wrote that he was in trouble and needed my aid. That settled it. I decided that I would not go; that I had troubles enough where I was. And having triumphed over temptation in this decision, and convinced myself of my essential strength of character, when Mrs. Quale wired: “Please come. He needs you,” naturally I packed my trunk and went at once.

Bob met me in the ferryhouse at Twenty-third Street. In the cab he told me that he intended to marry Angela Quayle. And while I was still in a confusion of doubtful congratulations, he announced that P. Q.’s father, who had died at sea, and Angela’s grandmother, who had been abandoned on the Isle of Man, were husband and wife. And when I objected that he could hardly marry his father’s niece, he said, coldly: “I’m not his son. I’ve known it for years.”

If I have failed to give the quality of a dramatic denouement to these astounding statements, it is

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because there was no true dramatic quality whatever in the scene. It was casual and self-conscious and distracted. Bob had a manner of bitter indifference to what he was saying; and when he said, "I'm not his son," he leaned forward to look out the cab window, at men working in the street, before he added, "I've known it for years." I was staring at him, at once stupefied and incredulous. He looked at me challengingly. I looked away, but not before I saw that his manner was assumed in order to conceal emotion.

"Well," I decided, "this is a sweet mess."

He made a sound in his nose that was probably intended to be an amused snort of disgusted agreement. "Besides," he said, "he's dying."

"Who's dying?"

"The old man."

"Good heavens! I haven't seen anything ——"

"No. They've given it out that he has rheumatism. It's neuralgia of the heart. Angina pectoris. He's likely to pop off any minute."

The cab rattled and jolted along, with sudden jerks and traffic stoppages. I felt that if we could only be stationary and quiet somewhere for a moment, I might realize the situation sufficiently to say something adequate and think of something helpful. We dropped a back wheel into a hole in the pavement just as I began, "This is awful ——"

"Town's always torn up in the summer," he apologized. "Mending pavements."

“I mean it’s awful for your mother.”

“Oh.” He nodded.

I could think of nothing more to say.

“I haven’t told her practically anything—except that I want to marry Angela.”

If I had had any sense at all, I might have demanded some convincing proofs of his statements. How did he know that he was not P. Q.’s son? How had he learned that P. Q. and his father had run away and—did he mean that the five hundred dollars with which P. Q. had landed was guilty money?

I got up courage at last to ask him that.

He said: “I suppose so. They left her in poverty there, with a child—Angela’s mother. She never heard of either of them afterward. If he weren’t dying I’d go to him and make him fork out for her. He’s not likely to leave *me* much. And the other two will never give up anything. And I can’t tell mother about it. I don’t want her to know he’s been—that kind of—” He choked up.

He choked up, and suddenly, in the midst of my horror and my sympathy, I found myself filled with an outrageous sense of exultation. To put it too flatly, I felt that life, after all, could be worthy of an author! I felt like a student of landscape painting who had stumbled on a scene that was in the colors of Turner really. And I struggled to repress the feeling, with disgust, in silence, dazzled by the bright romantic glamour of a guilty fortune, an

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illegitimate heir, an erring wife, a whole plot of old crimes discovered on a deathbed. How stranger than fiction! And how dramatically elucidative of everything that had puzzled me about the family—P. Q.'s pursuit of security, Bob's revolt and his unhappiness, the absence of all brotherly affection, the division in the house, the mother's painful mouth. It seemed that I had penetrated to the old man's criminal secret, that evening at dinner. I began even to believe that he must have seen the accusation in my eyes and been disturbed by it.

I was recalled to the immediate realities by the sight of Gramercy Park. What was I to say? How was I to behave? How, especially, was I to face Mrs. Quale?

I said to Bob: "Don't let your mother know I'm here yet. I want to talk this over with you before I see her." By which I meant that I wanted to conspire with him in the inventing of some plausible untruth with which to deceive her. Accordingly, we sneaked up to his rooms and locked ourselves in. And there, with him sunken in a large and melancholy-looking armchair while I walked up and down portentously before him, we went over and over the perplexities of his tragic situation.

He wanted to marry Angela Quayle. Well, since there was no real relationship between them, he might do so. But he had told his mother of his love affair under solemn pledge of secrecy; she had been horrified at the thought of his marrying a

chorus girl, and she had kept his secret only because she knew that if his father learned of it he might be disinherited. His father was already sufficiently dissatisfied with him. It was unlikely that Bob would receive any large share of the estate. Most likely he would be provided with a small allowance from a trust fund, to be administered by his brothers. At best, then, if he waited for his inheritance he would be able to offer Angela Quayle only a niggardly incomplete rectification of the injustice that had been done her mother and her.

And Bob had achieved a far from niggardly moral magnification of that injustice. The Quale fortune had begun with P. Q.'s five hundred dollars in the bank. This money had been as good as stolen. P. Q.'s sister and his sister's child were entitled to a sum that should not only make restitution—with fifty years' compound interest—but recompense them for a lifetime of poverty, and so absolve P. Q. from his accumulated guilt. Good. But if Bob were to put in his claim for them he would have to prove who they were. And if he proved that, how was he to marry Angela? How was he to marry her without coming out openly as no son of P. Q.? Imagine the effect of such a bomb! He could not face it. He could not even face the dying man with the accusation about the five hundred dollars. He could only stew around, and suffer horribly, and agonize with shame and guilt and disillusionment.

Put down this way, in more or less coherent

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sentences, the muddle seems intricate enough. But it was much more bewildering as I tried to arrange it in my mind from Bob's jumbled mass of disconnected mutterings and exclamations of emotion and brooding silences that ended in irrelevant replies when I was trying to get clear answers to my questions about the facts. For instance, when I dared to ask him, in embarrassed indirectness, how he had learned that he was not P. Q.'s son, he replied, with reserve: "I've always known it. Since I was six years old. I overheard her say it. She was crying about something. She said—she said she was glad of it." And that was as definite as he would be.

Of the relationship between P. Q.'s father and Angela's grandmother, he said: "There's no doubt about it. Angela's grandfather was a tailor. He took his son, and ran away, and left them to starve. When I found that out I said to mother, 'Grandfather was a tailor, wasn't he?' She looked startled. She wanted to know where I'd heard it. She admitted it was true. There's something else besides. I don't want to talk about it."

At the end of an hour I had to accept the situation as he saw it. And, accepting it, the question was, what was he to do? What would I advise him to do? He had told no one but me. He had not even told Angela. And I could see no sailing course whatever for him. I could see nothing but the rocks and the shoals and the dangerous cross-currents and the certainties of shipwreck. The best I could do was

to hold him back. And I was still holding him when his mother sent word that she wished to see me.

"Look here, Bob," I said, "I'll tell her you're worrying because you want to marry Angela and you've found out something that makes it impossible. And I've promised not to tell anybody what it *is*."

That seemed innocently ingenious.

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It was not ingenious enough to satisfy Mrs. Quale. She studied me anxiously, waiting, reserving her suspicion till I had finished. Then she asked, "Why is he behaving this way with his father?"

"What way?"

"Refusing to see him."

I tried to look blank, without blushing.

"He hasn't gone to him since he was brought home. Peter wanted him to play checkers one night, and he ran away, out of the house."

I shook my head, to express ignorance, looking down at the floor.

"And he's drinking," she said, hoarsely, "with his father dying. It's terrible. He's not a bad boy. There's something the matter. And no one will tell me."

She was entirely pitiful, and that surprised me. Perhaps I had expected to feel some moral disapprobation of her as the guilty victim of her own trans-

gression. I was so moved that I could only stammer: "I—I'm awfully sorry. I can keep him from drinking."

"I don't understand him," she said. "I don't understand any of them. They're all so queer. And he's dying. They don't seem to realize it."

I glanced at her furtively. She was staring ahead of her, at nothing, blinded by her tears, her eyebrows twitching in a pathetic sort of bewildered frown. It was a childish expression, helpless, inadequate. I could not endure it. I ran away. I left her without any apology and hurried back to Bob.

"All right," I said, wiping my forehead. "That'll give us time to turn round. Now listen. You'll have to tell your brothers, sometime—your eldest brother, anyway. He'll be the head of the family when—if the estate's left to him, and it's sure to be. He'll feel the way you do about this. He'll want to keep it from your mother as much as *you* do. And he'll not risk telling it to a man with heart disease. Why not try him out—with the part about Angela, anyway? Perhaps if you can make him feel that there may be a public scandal, a law suit or something—I don't know. They have *some* sort of legal claim, haven't they? And even if they haven't, they've a moral claim, and you can insist on it yourself. It's the only opening that I can see. You'll have to begin somewhere, you know."

I was not very clear about it at first, but the more

we talked the clearer it became. P. Q. was dying, and no one wished to make trouble for him; but Angela and her mother had a claim on the estate, and unless something could be done for them, all kinds of public scandal might ensue. It was John Quale's duty to handle the problem tactfully, diplomatically, without worrying his father about it and without exposing his father's guilty past to anybody else. Bob need not speak of his own interest in Angela. Still less need he disclose "the secret of his birth," as you might say. He could be quite disinterested, rather dutiful, and only concerned to save his father's good name.

By the time we had eaten a restaurant luncheon together—conspiring like a pair of amateur blackmailers at a table in a corner—we had persuaded ourselves that our scheme was Machiavellian. Bob phoned to catch his brother in his office. I saw him start on his way to the interview, pale but unflinching; and I went back to his rooms to wait for news of his success.

The house was hushed and guarded, with a door-keeper to see that no one rang the bell and a secretary to winnow out callers in an anteroom. P. Q. was conducting his affairs from his sickbed, and there was a noiseless coming and going of messengers and confidential clerks and business associates from his side of the house; but Mrs. Quale had refused herself to all visitors, and there was no one to be seen in her apartments but a silent butler in

the entrance hall. P. Q. for more than a month had endured an intermittent pain in his breast without speaking of it. He had ignored it as he ignored his rheumatism or anything else that tried to interfere with his having his own way in the world. Then, one morning, arriving at his office, he had been taken with a seizure so violent that he had collapsed breathless in his chair and sunk face down on his desk blotter. His physician, hastily summoned, had recognized the fatal symptoms of angina pectoris. P. Q. had been brought back to his home, grimly silent, and put in his bed. The doctor had told him the truth. He had taken it without blinking. He had not referred to it, himself, since, and none of his family had dared to speak openly to him about it. He had acted—and he continued to act—on the fiction that he was bedridden with rheumatism, and everyone on his side of the house either accepted, or pretended to accept, his repudiation of the truth. It was only in our half of the establishment that the lurking presence of death was not altogether snubbed and discountenanced.

This annoyed me. It may have been that I did not like to think of P. Q. lording it over his mortality. Or perhaps I had the artistic feeling that death should have been received on the scene with Shakespearean emotions and the gestures of drama—not told to sit down a minute and wait, like a needy visitor, till P. Q. had finished with more important matters. I began to be afraid that even

Bob's iridescent tragedy might get itself pricked and exploded if it came under this old man's undaunted eye. If he could wave death aside and keep it sitting, unnoticed by everybody, in the very corner of his bedroom, how easily might he not order these other dusty skeletons back into their cupboards and lock them up.

I escaped the thought by taking a Victorian novel from Bob's bookshelves and getting into a world where death and dishonor and contested wills and illegitimate children were the essentially important materials of life, not public utilities and affairs of finance and the business for which old P. Q. kept death and repentance waiting. I must admit, however, that I fell asleep over the book, and I could not have fallen asleep over P. Q.

I woke to find the room darkening, and Bob had not returned. Belowstairs, nothing had been heard of him. I phoned his brother's office. No answer. The office was closed. I left word with the butler not to expect us for dinner, and I sallied out to find him. There was no trace of his trail in any of his favorite haunts on Broadway. No one had seen him there. The butler kept replying over the phone that no message had come from him. I began to suspect that our plans had crashed. The consequent sinking feeling reminded me that I had had no dinner. I ate hastily at a quick-lunch counter, and depression settled on my center of digestion in a conviction of impending disaster. I caught at the final hope that

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Bob might go to see Angela Quayle, whose musical comedy was still resisting heat prostration at the Manhattan. I could not get past the doorkeeper. I had to write a message to her and send it in. The messenger came back with a curt: "Nope. Hasn't seen 'm." I wandered back to Broadway and stood at a loss on the curb.

In those days, on the corner of Thirty-fourth Street and Broadway, there was a drug store. A number of people had gathered in front of it to watch a hansom cab, its driver, and its occupant. I supposed that they were all enjoying an orthodox squabble over the cab fare. I heard laughter, real laughter, pleased and gleeful. I stared at them dismally. And then I saw a familiar figure back out of the cab. And it was Bob.

As I hurried toward him he climbed the wheel to reach the driver, and I supposed he was about to pull the man out of his seat. Not so. The cabby was grinning and the bystanders were in a roar. What was it? What was he doing? I elbowed my way into the crowd. He was spraying the man with perfume from an atomizer. I could smell it.

I watched him, dumfounded. He lurched down from the wheel, sprayed it, and went forward to the horse. He began at the hoof of a hind leg and proceeded spraying solemnly up the leg to the flank, across the barrel of the body to the shoulder, down the foreleg to the hoof, up again to the neck —

By this time, everybody was in hysterics, and

such a mob had gathered that I foresaw the arrival of the police. I fought my way in to him.

"Here, *Bob*," I said, "what're you doing?"

He looked at me unsteadily. "'S rodden world," he muttered. "Dole like smell."

He returned to his business of reforming his environment with rose water. His audience encouraged him with squeals of delight.

"The police will be here in a minute." I pleaded.  
"Quit this, for heaven's sake."

He mumbled that the police could go—

"That's all right for you," I said, "but you're going to get *me* into trouble again. It'll be the privileges of Broadway that I'll lose, this time. They'll put me in jail."

It was a lucky allusion to the fracas in the college library. He evidently remembered that incident, and his flight from it, with shame. "'S aw right, o' man," he said. "No 'fense? Li'l' nice perf'm. Whas-matter?"

"It's not allowed on Broadway," I complained.  
"That's what's the matter. It's against the law.  
They'll arrest us."

"Lel-less beat it," he said, anxiously. "Whur's cab? Y'all packed, o' man?"

"Here." I took the atomizer from him and helped him to the step of the hansom. He got in with superhuman difficulty. I said to the cabby, "Drive us around Central Park for a few hours."

He winked and flourished his whip. "Now then,

my Christian fr'en's," he called, jerking up his horse, "stan' back off this here flower bed. Giddap, honey-bunch, er the bees 'll get yah!"

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We left the laughter behind us. We did not leave the perfume. Bob had evidently sprayed himself and the interior of the cab liberally before I arrived. And that endless drive sticks in my memory as a sickeningly sweet stench and a maddening incoherence of befuddled babble and an anxiety that sat on my chest like a bad dream. What had happened?

It was impossible to make out. All I could gather was Bob's philosophic opinion that the world was vile and that his brother John was one of its centers of corruption. "Rodden," he kept saying. "Mind's rodden. Money's rodden." And every now and then he would giggle and say something that sounded like "Thinks I'm crazy." Outside of that he was only interested in finding the next saloon, and we were designedly unable to come on one in Central Park. The interminable procession of drive lights and tree trunks tired him out. "Los' 'P a fores'," he complained, wearily. "Li'l babes 'P a wood." He began to weep. He fell asleep against my shoulder.

We drove round and round till midnight.

I had intended to keep him in the cab until he

sobered, but I had not too much money in my pockets, and when I could find none in his I had to direct the driver to take us home. There was no possibility of disputing the fare. I gave the cabby all the money that I had in the world, and he took it, sniffingly, as a poor thing, but his own.

Bob had wakened in a solemn stupor, but with some realization of where he was, and he mounted the steps to the door gravely, but in a heavy sea. The butler had waited up for him with a message that his father wanted to see him as soon as he came in. He waved the man aside, intent on the absorbing uncertainties of his locomotion. We guided him upstairs to his rooms. Fortunately, the steps were so padded that we might all have rolled down the two flights together and made no more noise than a galumping cat. We got him into his sitting room, but he planted himself in an armchair there and refused to go any farther.

“His father can’t see him in this state,” I said.

The butler stood over him, distressed, with a nose that judged and condemned him. The perfume was vulgar and without shame, even before a butler. He opened a window and left us to air.

Bob fell asleep again. I sat down to smoke, like a man at the end of a hard day, and then the butler returned with word that old P. Q. wanted to see me.

This was as unexpected as if I had been suddenly called on to come out from behind the scenery of a stage play and take a part before the audience.

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"*Me?*" I said. "What does he want to see *me* for?"

The butler did not trouble himself to reply. He regarded Bob with pained disapproval.

I asked, weakly, "Where is he?"

He said, "I'll take you to him."

He led me downstairs, and across the hall to P. Q.'s deserted reception room, and upstairs again to a slatted summer door that looked like an inside shutter. He turned the knob noiselessly and said, "Go in." I entered in darkness.

I had made up my mind to say that I knew nothing, that I had had no part in the affair, that I had only just arrived in town. And with this determined, I had foreseen myself, in a conspicuously lighted moment, making a discreet, if awkward, bow to the tragedy and backing out. The darkness upset my rehearsal. It was some time before I made out that I was in a dimly lighted room with a large screen in front of me.

When I came around the screen I saw the bedside lamp, the white pillows, and, upturned among them, P. Q.'s sharp nose illuminated. He was lying on his back, under a sheet and a blanket, motionless. The rest of the room was a cave of darkness in which there shone, dimly, mirrors and mahogany and the silver things on a dresser top. The bed was an old-fashioned edifice of ornate carving.

I came slowly toward the light. He said something to some one, without moving; and a nurse

whom I had not noticed rose from the far side of the bed, and came around the foot of it, and passed me silently on her way out. I drew near enough to see that he was looking at the ceiling thoughtfully. He did not speak.

I asked, at last, "You sent for me?"

He closed his eyes slowly and opened them, as one nods assent. I waited.

I supposed that he must be very weak. I was the more surprised when his voice came low, but strong and even rancorous:

"What's the matter with that boy? Why is he drinking?"

He did not look at me. His gaze had not left the ceiling. I said: "I don't know. He seems terribly upset?"

He asked at once, "What's he upset about?"

I was about to answer, "I don't know," when his eyes rolled around to me, as sharp as an old shaggy hound's and the light glittered on them piercingly, and I looked away, intimidated, like a schoolboy. When I looked back at him again he was studying the ceiling as before.

He said, "He's been telling you that story about me, has he?"

I cleared my throat unsuccessfully. I could not get my voice to come.

"Has he gone crazy?"

That startled me. He asked it seriously.

"Crazy?" I said. "No!" And then I under-

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stood Bob's giggle ("Thinks I'm crazy"), and I guessed that John Quale had dug the whole story out of Bob and reported it to his father as an evidence of insanity. Even so, I was not prepared for the next question.

Without any change of tone, he asked, "Has he told you he's not my son?"

I could not answer. I could only stare at him. I could not decide whether he knew that Bob was not his son or knew that he *was*. He did not move an eyelash. And he was otherwise so still that it seemed as if his head were the only part of him that was alive. I could not even see any stir of breathing.

He said, quietly: "Answer me. I haven't time to wait."

And I got the feeling that he was lying there, looking at death on the ceiling and conserving every heartbeat and cautiously drawing little breaths and making no smallest unnecessary movement that might be a strain; and I answered, hastily, "Yes."

"Where did he get that idea?"

"He's had it a long time—ever since he was a child."

His face changed. He blinked several times as if something had been suddenly made clear to him. "Is he sober enough to understand, if I talk to him?"

I shook my head. "I don't think so. He *will* be, by morning."

"I can't wait." He indicated the door with a

glance. "If he can't come, get his mother. Send in that nurse."

I hurried out, seriously excited, and in telling the butler to call Mrs. Quale I must have given him the impression that P. Q. was dying. I startled Bob into a bleary wakefulness, shaking him and prodding him with panicky insistence. "Wake up! Wake up! Bob! Pull yourself together. Bob! Listen! Your father wants to see you. Come on. You've got to go. Your brother's told him everything. You've got to see him. Pull yourself together."

He frowned with the effort to understand. "What? What's the matter? Is he——?"

"Yes," I said, "he *is*. Hurry up. He wants to see you. He wants to tell you. You've made a mistake."

"Mistake?" His bloodshot eyes focused on me dizzily.

"Yes." I forced him to his feet. "About Angela —about everything. He can explain it. He's waiting for you. Come on. Get that smelly coat off. Get into a dressing gown. Here!"

I suppose it was my tone that did it. I was really afraid that the old man might die before we got back to him, and I was as frantic as if the house were afire. Bob made a desperate effort to comprehend, to obey, to grasp what was going on, to clear his mind for action. He put his hand to his forehead, his face pale and wet with the strain of his mental struggle. I pulled off his coat and thrust

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him into his dressing gown. I hurried him to the bathroom and attacked him with a sponge of cold water, and straightened his necktie, and tried to rectify his tousled look of young profligacy. I succeeded in getting his brain steadied somewhat, but he staggered when he walked, and I had to help him to his father's room and lead him into it, holding him by the elbow.

His mother was already there, weeping helplessly at the bedside. P. Q. was saying: "You knew I'd have to die sometime, didn't you? Don't make it any harder for me."

He moved his head to see us. "Come here," he ordered. "Both of you."

I brought Bob to the light, looking down on the floor guiltily. There was a pause. I felt Bob stiffen, confronting his father's scrutiny, and I heard him breathing hard.

P. Q. said: "This story about my father and me is all damn foolishness. I didn't run away from home. He took me, when I wasn't more than five years old. And he worked in Dublin for four years and earned the money to come to America with. He was a tailor. For some God-forsaken reason I've been ashamed to admit I had a tailor for a father—a woman's job, anyway. That's why I never spoke of him. But I didn't remember my mother, and I didn't know I had a sister, and I didn't even know that I hadn't been born in Ireland. The story that I stole anybody's money is a damn lie!"

I heard Mrs. Quale murmur, "Peter!" protestingly.

"Well," he grumbled, "that's what it *is!* Now, what's this nonsense about your not being my son?"

"Peter!"

I took one look at Mrs. Quale and saw the amazed indignation of tearful innocence staring in her face. I muttered, "Beg your par—" and left Bob swaying, and fled.

9

As I consider Bob's whole romance, now, I realize that I should have suspected the motivation of his characters from the first—because it was conscious motivation, and if life teaches us anything, it teaches us that human motives are always almost unconscious and self-disguised. That was the very point on which fiction had misled me. And in my fiction-fed stupidity, I had helped to mislead Bob.

P. Q.'s lifelong pursuit of security was not the indication of any moral guilt. It was the unconscious result of being thrown on the world a mere child, unprotected. He had made his own way as a youth, without friends and affection; and when he arrived where friends and affection were his for the asking, he had not the faculty of asking for them. His lack of education was the source of that unconscious feeling of inferiority which expressed itself in defensive insolence and aggressive domination. He had missed all the socializing influences

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of school-yard companionship, and his philosophy of life was "You be damned." He had been given no social feeling for public service, and he saw his public properties as all his own. He had never been taught the rules of the civilized game of community life, and he would steal men from the checkerboard in order to win. He had to win. It was the necessity of his unsocialized ego, of his sense of hidden inferiority, of his constant need to defeat his opponent and overcome his own fear.

I should have known it. And I should have known that in a divided family, such as the Quales, Bob's delusion that he was not his father's son would almost inevitably arise out of his championing his mother and ranging himself on *her* side against his father. I should not have needed Bob's broken explanations when he returned to his room and sank into a chair and took his head in his hands and began to sob that he had been a fool, that he had misjudged his father, that he had always been secretly "proud of the old man" and really fond of him. "I've—I've always been his favorite," he wept. "And I knew it. But I—I wouldn't admit it to myself. I fought him. I tried to hate him. He knew! He knew all along. He said to me, 'That's why you'd never let me win at checkers, eh?' And he tried to smile. God!" He wept, heartbroken. "What a fool I've been!"

"But, Bob!" I said. "You told me you'd heard your mother ——"

"Oh that was all damn nonsense!" He looked up with a tear-drenched, contorted face. "She was unhappy about something. They'd quarreled. And she meant that I wasn't like the other boys and wasn't like *him*. And she said, 'Thank Heaven, he's not a Quale'—or something like that. And I hated him because he'd made her cry. And I didn't want to be his son. And I got the fool idea—" He gasped and shook his head, unable to go on.

When he caught his breath again he groaned: "The poor old geezer, he tried to apologize to us both—to explain that he'd been a failure with us because he'd always been kind of dumb and—and busy—and piled up with things he had to do—things that interested him more than they ought to. Gee! It tore the guts out of me to listen to him."

He got blindly to his feet and made his way blunderingly to the bathroom and had his cry out there under the pretense of washing his face. When he came back he was swollen-eyed and disfigured with weeping, but the worst was over. "He's got his nerve with him," he said. "He knows every heart-beat's likely to be his last, and it worries him about as much as I'd be if I was waiting for the dentist. He's as sore as boils about John. The big mutton-head tried to make him believe I ought to be sent to the lunatic asylum. He thinks the old man's going to leave him in charge of the estate. I'll bet he's not. John's bug about the money and the position it 'll give him. So's Paul. Paul thinks

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that if he only had money enough he could make everybody be good and go to church. John thinks he's going to make them all work and be efficient—going to run the country —”

(And, as a matter of fact, Bob proved to be right. P. Q. left his estate in the hands of a trust company to be administered until his youngest grandchild should be of age. Characteristic!)

We talked and talked until daylight began to come in the window that the butler had opened on us. And it was the last talk of the sort that we had together. When I woke late next day, Bob was already in his father's room. He came to lunch in a subdued glow of happiness, and his mother and he carried on a secret interchange of meaningful smiles, no matter what we talked about. He was like a boy in love. And he seemed to have forgotten Angela.

“We're going to rig up the checkerboard tonight,” he said, “and try to play a game. The nurse 'll make the moves for him, so he'll not have to raise a finger if he doesn't want to.”

I was glad enough to see him happy. And Mrs. Quale tried to conceal from me the reproachful thought that I had deceived her and encouraged Bob in his almost tragical delusion. But it was obvious that they both knew he did not “need” me any more; and after a lonely evening spent in looking for amusement, while Bob entertained his dad, I pretended that a letter from home was an

## SOME DISTINGUISHED AMERICANS

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urgent summons to return, and they let me go with polite regrets. On the train I realized that it was the end of our companionship; that Bob would never be able to forgive me for sharing his ridiculous mistake with him. And he never did.

According to the newspapers, P. Q. died of an attack of rheumatism that had reached his heart. The editorials and the obituaries all described him as a rare and original character. I agreed with them at the time, but I am not so sure, now, that he was not the commonest type of successful American.

E. H. Reede, the neurologist, has written:

Adler introduced a revolutionary concept into the study of psychic mechanisms by showing that the perception of inferiority, insecurity or danger, stimulates in the subconscious mind a mobilization of psychic dexterities which results in that super-psychism recognized as genius. In America, the insecurity that resides in Puritan repression was confronted by the new-world menace of pioneer perils; and insecurity triumphed over menace only by virtue of a concentrated intellectual cunning. That has produced the one unique American type. It is the archetype of our great frontiersmen, our successful politicians, and our predatory business men who stalk and ambush their competitors.

And, at any rate, it is certainly the type of Peter Quale.

## VI. DR. ADRIAN HALE HALLMUTH

### 1

**Y**OU have never heard of him. Naturally. He was one of the most valuable citizens of our day. He saved innumerable lives. He taught others how to save more innumerable lives. But, our civilization being what it is, he could live in distinguished obscurity for twenty years, in New York City itself, within hailing distance of all the newspaper presses and publicity agents and notoriety factories of the metropolis, and you would never hear of him.

I never heard of him, myself, until Doctor Ward spoke of him to me—Dr. Lucius Freeman Ward.

“Hallmuth was the best surgeon that America has turned out,” Doctor Ward said. “I’ve seen students come out of his clinics almost with tears in their eyes—tears of admiration and a sort of despair—like young pianists from a Paderewski concert. He worked as if he were clairvoyant, as if he had eyes in the blade of his knife. And when he came to one of those abdominal operations where you have to depend on your fingers to tell you what you can’t see—and you’re wearing rubber gloves—he had a sixth sense. I’ve never seen anything like it. Never.”

I believe it was this suggestion of clairvoyance that really interested me. Occult powers in a surgeon! It was like being told that the Stock Exchange at its noisiest hour was haunted.

I asked for evidence and instances; and, of course, it began to appear that Doctor Hallmuth's magic was just surgical legerdemain. He had devoted himself to his profession with such singleness of determination that he had developed, as it were, special sense organs in his hands. He could shut his eyes, spread his fingers, and tell you to the sixty-fourth of an inch how far his finger tips were apart. He could separate his hands, in the same way, and give the exact distance between his fore-fingers, blindfold. "He had a grip like a pipe wrench," Doctor Ward said. "He could pull a cork with his second and third fingers. They closed on it like a pair of pliers. He could take hold of your wrist, that way, and fairly bruise it. They weren't fingers; they were steel calipers." The cords in the backs of his hands played freely back and forth over the knuckles, and he could expand and contract the width of the hand as if the bones in it were the ribs of a fan. "He wasn't altogether born that way," Ward explained. "He had purposely acquired it, like a contortionist, as part of his training."

Ward had known him from boyhood. They had both been born in the New England town of Primp-ton, Massachusetts, but they came of fam-

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ilies separated by such a distance in the social scale that it was not until they arrived in the same class at college that they became intimate. Ward had intended to study law. Hallmuth persuaded him to go into medicine. "It was like a religious enthusiasm with him," Ward said. "He converted me. There's no other word for it. And that was one of the things that puzzled me about Hallmuth until quite lately—what had given him this fanatical feeling about medicine?"

Hallmuth's father owned the textile mills at Primpton, and Hallmuth, as the eldest son, should have succeeded him in the business. The grandfather had been an immigrant weaver who married a Massachusetts girl; the father married one of the New England Hales; there had never been a doctor anywhere in the immediate family.

"You'd have expected Hallmuth to be a parson, if anything," Ward said. "The old people were as devout as Jonathan Edwards. They had a fine old religious prejudice against science as atheistic, and he had a fight for it before they let him go to the medical school. How do you suppose he beat them? Well, he persuaded them that he had 'a call' to medicine—like a minister's call. And he had. I found out, just lately, how the call came. It's one of the most curious things I ever ran across."

"Tell me about it," I said.

He did not respond at once. He sat sunken in his armchair, pinching his chin between thumb and

foresinger, and looking through me thoughtfully, with one eyebrow higher than the other and his eyes not focused. It gave him a melancholy expression.

He had just heard that Hallmuth, in charge of a field-hospital unit, had died from exposure in the Serbian retreat over the mountains of Montenegro, somewhere between Petch and Scutari, in December, 1915. Or, rather, he had just had a confirmation of the cable news of Hallmuth's death, in a letter from his assistant, a Doctor Rogers. It was this letter that had moved Ward to speak of Hallmuth to me.

"Tell you about it?" he said, at last. "I don't know how to tell you about it. It's too long a story. It's the story of Hallmuth's whole life."

He thought it over, in a sort of mute wonder.

"The Greeks would have called it Fate," he said. "And it shows what this thing is sometimes—the thing that we call Fate."

He nodded to himself.

"Well," he concluded, "I'll tell you the parts that are more or less significant."

## 2

He began to tell me about the time when Hallmuth and he had been internes together at the old St. Luke's; and his reminiscences, after the manner of such, were concerned more with riotous doings out of hours than with duties in the hospital. Hallmuth had two enviable qualifications for leader-

ship in their young medical convivialities: he could drink as much beer as a German student, and he played the piano like a rhythmical baboon.

"He'd spent a year abroad," Ward explained, "chiefly in Vienna. He came back with a prejudice against the Germans—due to their operating on charity patients without giving them anæsthetics, as far as I could make out—and another prejudice against their music. He called it melodic suicide, tonal pessimism. He would never play anything but dances and ragtime. He said he had taken up the piano to develop his hands. I don't believe that. He had a gift for music, if he had cared to follow it, but he wouldn't. He wouldn't surrender to his emotions. He never went to concerts or operas. If an orchestra started anything at all moving, he'd get out."

The gang to which they belonged had found a little Hungarian restaurant where they could get *table d'hôte* dinners cheap and have the freedom of a good piano. It was the resort of another clique, also, a group from the underworld; and among these were two who became involved with Hallmuth.

One was a thin-lipped young crook whom they nicknamed "the Jackdaw" because of his color and his sinister air; and the other was the Jackdaw's "skirt," a silent and adoring child of the streets, so blond and chalk-faced that they called her "Angel Mary." They did not know the real name of either.

"We'd noticed them together several times at a

table in the back of the joint," Ward said, "and for some reason Hallmuth took a scunner to the Jack-daw on sight."

He had very sleek and glossy black hair, and a bony nose, and a round unwinking eye that looked at you sideways like a rooster's. The girl used to sit and wait for him, without eating; and she would give him a searching, frightened glance as he entered, to see what his mood was. If he came in with his hat on the side of his head, swinging his bamboo cane, she brightened as if the sun had risen. They sat and talked over their food, with their heads together, so that you could never hear what they said; and at the end of the meal she paid the check and went out cheerfully and left him to smoke over his empty plate, pleased with himself.

More often he entered dragging his stick, his hat down on his nose; and he sat without looking at her, and only spoke to her out of the side of his mouth, sourly. Then she would eat her meal as quickly as possible and pay the check and slink away as dejected as a disappointed child.

"We knew a lot of policemen, from our ambulance work," Ward explained. "Hallmuth asked them about the Jackdaw, and found out that he was one of Chick Allen's cadets. Probably a pick-pocket and petty con man, too. The girl was on the streets, helping to support him."

One night they sat at a table directly behind Hallmuth and began their meal quietly, but ended

it with a quarrel about a ruby brooch that the Jackdaw wanted to give her and she was afraid to take. Hallmuth was listening. The others were not. And when the crook, in the midst of a hoarse whispered controversy, suddenly slapped her face, Hallmuth spun around and struck him an open-handed blow on the side of his head that toppled him off his chair. He sprang up and tried to rush Hallmuth, and Hallmuth knocked him down.

That started a "free for all." There were several of the medical clique in the cafe, and at first they had all the best of it; but more of Chick Allen's gang kept coming in, with brass knuckles and black-jacks, and the students had to defend themselves with chairs and carafes and anything else they could snatch up. Some one called in the police, and that saved them.

"Hallmuth and I were cornered," Ward said, "behind a table that we had overturned, beating off three or four toughs who were trying to disfigure us. And behind us was the girl. When the police stopped the fight, Hallmuth saw that she had the brooch in her hand—the brooch that she and the Jackdaw had quarreled about. She had caught it up when the table overturned. Hallmuth said: 'Here! Don't let them see you with that,' and he snatched it away from her. Then when the cops were lining us up, he held it out to the Jackdaw and said, 'I think this is yours!'

"Of course, a plain clothes man grabbed it at

once. He demanded, ‘Where did you get that?’ and Hallmuth explained.

“The detective took out his handcuffs. ‘I guess this ’ll do for you,’ he said to the Jackdaw, and arrested him for burglary.

“I forget the details of that part of the business. Some one confessed and the Jackdaw went up the river for five years. All I remember is our end of the affair. The desk sergeant didn’t hold Hallmuth or me, but he held the girl, and Hallmuth went down to court next day and paid her fine. I knew this at the time, but I didn’t know that he took her uptown and got her a place to live and found work for her to keep her off the streets. And I didn’t know that he continued seeing her.

“Chick Allen’s gang were looking for us and we had to keep away from their end of the town. That broke up our parties for a while. I thought that Hallmuth was spending his off hours with a girl named Helen Kane—Doctor Kane’s daughter. You remember Kane? He had a fashionable practice—Madison Avenue. Helen was a handsome big girl, athletic. Hallmuth used to ride with her in the Park. I thought he was seeing her whenever he went off without me.

“Well, he wasn’t. He was having some sort of affair with ‘Angel Mary.’ I didn’t suspect it even when she came looking for me, one night at the hospital, in a pouring rain, soaking wet. I wasn’t there, and she didn’t ask for Hallmuth, and she

went away without leaving any message. They had had a quarrel—as I learned later—and she was trying to find him. He never said a word.

“Two or three days afterward she came to the dispensary for medicine and they turned her into the free ward with a bad attack of pneumonia. One of the nurses came to me, from her. She didn’t mind involving me, but she was game about protecting Hallmuth. ‘Tell him I’m here,’ she said, ‘but don’t tell anyone I know him.’

“I told him, but he didn’t say anything. He used to get into the ward to see her, without letting anyone but the nurse know. I was with him there, at other times, but Angel Mary didn’t give either of us away by so much as a look that anyone would notice—not even when she was dying. She was a game kid, all right.

“I didn’t know what had been going on until Hallmuth asked me to see that she wasn’t buried in Potter’s Field, and gave me money for the undertaker. Even then I had to guess the truth from the change that came over him. He began to be queer. He stopped riding in the Park—said the crows there gave him ‘the willies.’ And then he dropped Helen Kane—said he hated dark women, anyway. And then he quit St. Luke’s and went back to Vienna. And I lost track of him for a long time.

“It seems he took his holidays in the Balkans while he was over there, and he learned to speak some of the languages—Serbian, at least. That’s

why he volunteered for service with the Serbian Relief—that and his feeling about the Germans. Well——”

## 3

Ward paused, and cleared his throat as if he were going on at once, and then fell silent, leaning forward in his chair and looking at his feet. I supposed that he had suddenly become aware that he was rambling in his narrative and getting nowhere; and it had the effect of a flash of thought-transference when he looked up at me to ask, “Did you notice the significance of all that?”

“Of all what?”

“Of all those incidents? The Jackdaw? The blond Angel Mary? The crows that gave him the willies?”

I shook my head, finding it empty.

He smiled. “I didn’t either, at the time. I didn’t even suspect that there was any significance in them at all, until just before he sailed for England to volunteer for work in the Balkans. He came to Washington to visit the British Embassy, and he dropped in to call on me.”

Here Ward drifted off into another long digression. It seems that when he left St. Luke’s he went into general practice, and became dissatisfied with his inability to cure anything but the simple germ diseases, and caught at a new theory of the effect of the internal glands on the body as the cause of much

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ill health, and made himself a sort of specialist in the functions of these glands and their disorders. Then he found that the glands were affected by emotions to such a degree that in many cases he was merely treating, in the glands, the symptoms of a disturbance in the patient's mind; and this took him into the field of mind cure and psychology. By the time that Hallmuth returned from his surgical studies abroad, Ward had lost his faith in the knife as anything but a pruning hook, and Hallmuth had arrived where he would open a patient as inevitably as a watch repairer opens a watch. He perfected a new technic of sacral suspension, and brought the operation for appendicitis to the point of being as safe as pulling a tooth, and performed prodigies of skill in cutting diseased areas from essential organs without stopping the watch. To Ward, he was merely treating symptoms by removing the results of disorders which he did nothing to cure. They did not exactly quarrel about it; Ward was practicing in Washington, and Hallmuth in New York, and they were both too busy to write controversial letters; but they exchanged monographs on their pet subjects and agreed to differ in a silence that was not friendly. So, when Hallmuth came to Washington in the spring of 1915, and telephoned from his hotel to Ward, Ward accepted his invitation to dinner with natural misgivings.

"We had a whale of a fight," Ward said. "He'd been the big frog in his surgical puddle for fifteen

years, and he looked on me as a disciple who had gone astray. It took me till midnight to make him feel that he wasn't divine intelligence instructing an insect. Nobody had dared to argue with him for ten years, probably. We had a gory time."

The upshot of it was that Hallmuth came to see him on the following day, in his office.

"He had a challenge for me," Ward said. "He wanted to know why the sight of the purple grackle in Lafayette Park, that morning, had given him such a depression that instead of going on to the British Embassy he turned back to his hotel and went to bed. If there was anything in my theories about emotions and their origins, where did this emotion come from?"

In reply, Ward started to "dig," as he put it. When had Hallmuth first felt this depression at the sight of a black bird?

He had always felt it. For years, if he saw a crow, on his way to an operation, he couldn't help but feel that it meant bad luck.

Yes? And before that?

Well, he remembered meeting a girl at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and having a fit of the blues when he saw a painting of some battle scene in which vultures or some other black birds were settling on the dead.

"I didn't ask him whether this girl was Helen Kane," Ward said, "and I didn't remind him that he had given up riding in the Park because the

crows gave him the ‘willies.’ And I didn’t recall to him that he had dropped her because he disliked ‘dark women,’ and that he had hated the Jackdaw on sight and got himself into that mess with Angel Mary as a result—and all the rest of it. I was afraid that he’d blow up and accuse me of being crazy on my own dope. I said: ‘This thing probably traces back to your early childhood. Do you remember any crows or blackbirds at home?’”

He replied that there were always crows in the pines on one side of the house, and they always depressed him. “The house was a gloomy old hole, anyway,” he said. “I was always glad when my holidays were over and I could get back to school. There was too much prayer and Puritanism at home.”

Ward asked: “Had it any other depressing associations? Had anybody died there—anyone that you were very fond of?”

“Yes,” Hallmuth said, “a cousin, when I was about seven—a little girl, an orphan. My parents had all but adopted her.”

“Was she dark or fair?” Ward asked.

“She had long yellow curls,” Hallmuth said. “I remember that. And I remember that when she took sick they wouldn’t let me into the room to see her. It was diphtheria, I suppose. And when they were all asleep one night I sneaked downstairs and got into bed with her.” He laughed contemptuously. “I remember the row they raised when they found us asleep together in the morning.”

"They were afraid you'd get the diphtheria?" Ward asked.

"It wasn't only that. They had nice clean Puritan minds, and poor little Fanny was three or four years older than I was—'old enough to know better,' as they said—and they treated the whole incident as a nasty scandal. Really! There had been something the matter about her mother. I never knew what. But they saw 'the bad blood' coming out in Fanny, and one of my maiden aunts was quite relieved when the diphtheria killed her. I heard her saying so—with tears, of course, and sanctimoniously—arguing that it was probably 'all for the best' to have her taken away from the sins and temptations of this world. Lord! how I hated her!"

Ward had been struck by the parallel between this incident and the death of Angel Mary in the hospital; and with that parallel in his mind, he asked, cryptically, "Where did the Jackdaw come in?"

Hallmuth answered: "It wasn't a jackdaw. It was a raven." And then he asked, astonished, "How did you know?"

"I didn't," Ward evaded him. "Tell me about the raven."

It was a stuffed bird, under a glass bell, on the mantelpiece of the room in which Fanny was laid out for burial. Hallmuth was taken in there by the family to join in funeral prayers; and he could not bear to look at Fanny's face; and he would not look at any of the family because he felt that they were

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all, like his aunt, glad that she had died; so he stared sullenly at the bright-eyed bird on the mantelshelf, with its head cocked on one side like some pert imp of Satan. "It looked like my aunt in her black dress," Hallmuth said. "And it looked like the undertaker. And all the mourners came trooping around like black birds. And I ran away and hid in the orchard and wouldn't go to the funeral. And I hated them all, and I hated the house, and I hated the crows——"

### 4

Ward, relating it, settled back in his chair and spread his hands as one says, "And there you are!"

"But do you mean to say——" I began.

"I mean to say," he interrupted, "that because of those incidents in his childhood, the black bird became associated with death in Hallmuth's mind to such a degree, and so unconsciously, that whenever he saw a crow or a purple grackle it gave him a depression, and a fear, and a sense of failure that he couldn't fight against. Any black bird was a symbol of death to his instinctive emotions. It was this fear and hatred of death that made him a doctor. His ambition to study medicine began almost immediately after his cousin died. That was where 'the call' came from. He wanted to fight death as a divinity student wants to fight sin. It was a real call. And it made him a great surgeon. But it also set his limitations as a physician. He

had to have tangible causes and "results"—hence surgery. With the knife, you know pretty well what you want to do, and you have only to acquire the necessary skill in order to do it, hence Hallmuth's drive to develop his hands. And I'm willing to bet it was his fear of death and of melancholy thoughts of death that made him hate any kind of sad music. And I'm not ashamed to say that I believe some of his hatred of Germany probably came of that two-headed black bird, the imperial eagle, or whatever it is. And when war broke out he saw it as the triumph of death and he gave up everything to fling himself into it."

"Did you tell him so?"

"I did not," Ward said, grimly. "It would have sounded as fantastic to him as it does to you. You people can't stand to have the childishness of your apparently intelligent mental processes exposed to you. I simply connected his blackbird depression with his first knowledge of death, and let it go at that. I'm sorry, now, that I didn't tell him the whole truth. I might have saved him."

"Saved him how?"

"Saved him from being killed by a blackbird."

### 5

I must have shown my amused incredulity. Ward got up and took a letter from the clutter of papers on his desk, and sat down with it, turning the pages.

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"The cable from London," he said, "reporting Hallmuth's death, announced that his hospital unit had arrived at Brindisi without him, and was held there in quarantine. I cabled to Rogers, his assistant, asking for confirmation. I got this letter from him after he reached Paris. Listen, now:—"

He began about page three. "'Hallmuth showed no signs of strain up to the night we left Kraguyevatz. We were retreating before the Germans under Mackensen, with the Austrians off to our left, I think, and the Bulgarians pressing in from the other flank to cut us off. Our orders were to get ourselves and our ambulances to Prishtina by way of——'"

He waved it aside. "I can't pronounce those names. It's immaterial."

"We understood that at Prishtina we might expect to meet the Allied forces on their way north to block the Bulgars. The road from Kraguyevatz to Prishtina took us down the entire Serbian line that faced the Bulgars, and we had the German guns behind us—where our division was fighting rear-guard actions—and the Bulgarian guns coming in nearer and nearer from the east. At first we had plenty of work—lots of wounded—wherever we pitched our hospital tents, but as the retreat became more of a rout the day's wounded could not be gathered up for us. They had to be left where they fell. It was this, I think, that first depressed Hallmuth. He was always miserable when he had no work to do.

“The weather was cold. Late in October. And rainy. The roads were full of refugees—mostly women and children, some of them mere tots—carrying bundles, driving their sheep and goats through the rain and mud, and these were all mixed up with army convoys and retreating troops. Desolate country. The villages through which we passed had all been evacuated. There was, of course, no food to be bought anywhere. We were all right. We had our supplies. But these women and children! We could see them sleeping in the bare fields at night, around little camp fires, without shelter, in the rain, hundreds of them. Whenever we halted, Hallmuth used to go and try to talk to them. Then, one day, he asked the major how many of them would starve to death. This was just before we got to Prishtina and we knew that every inch of Serbia was lost. The major said that, all told, he thought about half a million refugees would perish. After that Hallmuth never looked at them.

“Just outside of Prishtina he seemed to be all in. We had come through a gorge in the mountains, riding day and night, except when a jam of traffic held us up. We were on ponies. Very cold. I had on three pairs of heavy socks, and boots and overshoes, but even so I had to wrap my feet and my stirrups in straw and bandages. We came to a high plateau, with mountains on all sides, snow, and a moon shining. Everywhere dead horses,

dead oxen. The retreat had been going on ahead of us for days.

“This plateau, the major said, was a famous battlefield. I remember he waved his hand at it—he wore gray-woolen socks over his gloves—and he turned to Hallmuth to explain in a shout that five hundred years ago the Serbs were defeated there by the Turks, at the battle of Kossovo Polye, which means “the field of blackbirds.” Hallmuth had been in a sort of daze. All of a sudden he looked up at the sky as if he saw an airplane swooping down on him, and he began to kick his heels into his horse and beat it with his fists and yell at it. It broke into a staggering gallop and then stumbled and fell. He wasn’t hurt. He was thrown clear of the horse and lay unconscious. I thought, at the time, that he had been knocked senseless by the fall. I found that he had only fainted. It scared me a good deal.””

Ward looked up at me significantly, but made no comment, and went on with the letter.

“At Prishtina—’ No, we can skip that. He says the Allies didn’t arrive, and instead of going on south toward Salonika, they were ordered to turn west to Petch, at the foot of the mountains of Montenegro.

“We knew this meant the annihilation of Serbia. Two hundred thousand men, with all their convoys, and Heaven knows how many hundred thousand refugees with all *their* carts and cattle, had to squeeze through ——”

"Yes. Well. Let's see. 'Of course, there weren't roads enough. We had to take to the fields, following any sort of track, through swamp and bush—scrub oak—and boulders. The motor ambulance could just make it and no more. It was slow going, pulling them out of mudholes with ox teams, cutting brush to get them across bogs, riding ahead to find tracks they could travel on, and coming back to lead them. It began to be evident that we'd have to abandon them if we were to get away at all. Hallmuth wouldn't hear of it. It meant losing all our hospital equipment. He worked like mad to save them.

"Then, at Petch, the P. M. O. of the division told us it was impossible to get farther with cars. We couldn't even make it with carts, he said. We'd have to pack what we could on the horses, and leave the rest. This was really a blow to Hallmuth. He got a lot of the instruments out of their cases and put them in his rug bag, but, of course, he couldn't take them all. We hadn't pack saddles enough and we needed all the available room for food.

"We had to leave our tents, beds, clothes, cooking dishes, the whole field kitchen, all our hospital equipment—everything but food and blankets and the clothes we could put on. Hallmuth seemed to regret nothing but the surgical things. He turned away from them without a word, and as a matter of fact he spoke very little from that time on. We were getting away from the sound of

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## DR. ADRIAN HALE HALLMUTH

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German guns, but he kept watching the sky for airplanes — ””

Ward looked up at me. I had nothing to say. He went on:

“‘He kept watching the sky for airplanes— though, as a matter of fact, we saw none until we were bombed by them after we were safe in Medua on the other side of the mountains, and Hallmuth was no longer with us by then. He died between Petch and Roshai, if I remember. It’s all as confused as a nightmare to me. I didn’t make any entries in my diary after we left Petch. Even if I hadn’t been too tired at any time to think of it, my fingers were always too stiff with cold to hold a pencil. You see, we weren’t going through the mountains by the passes. Those were so full of refugees that it was impossible to get through them. We followed trails right over the ranges, through the woods, wading the streams, and lying down to sleep wherever the nights overtook us, often without fires, even, and sleeping with our feet against boulders so we wouldn’t slide down the mountain side and roll over a precipice. When we had wood we melted snow for water, made tea, and ate some of our tinned stuff, but we often had nothing for our ponies except beech leaves that we dug out from under the snow, and there were days when we were all so weak with exhaustion that I don’t know how we ever got through.

“‘We were in no danger of losing our way.

Hundreds of straggling soldiers and thousands of peasants were toiling along before and behind us. And the dead lay all along the track. Worse than the dead were the dying—men and women and children, sometimes in groups, sometimes a man or a woman alone, too weak to crawl any farther. We had to pretend we didn't see them, and hurry by. Hallmuth no longer paid any attention to them. He was terribly despondent about the war—about everything. I spoke to him about the awful loss of life, and he said, "All the years that we've been fighting to save lives, and they throw away more here in an hour! What was the use? Our lives have been wasted!" Most of the time we were too dazed and tired to talk.

"His death happened this way. At dusk on the 5th or 6th of December we were climbing along the side of a slope with a wood below us, and below the wood was a stream bed. We decided to camp for the night in the dry bed of the stream, and the order was given to turn aside and drop down through the wood and reassemble in the stream bed. It was every man for himself. There was from a foot to three feet of snow among the trees, and under the snow were boulders and fallen tree trunks. The branches of the trees were low enough to brush you out of the saddle, and the ponies slipped and slid down steep places. I was thrown twice, and I finished the descent on foot, with the pony following me."

“It was dark before I got to the bottom. Cameron was standing on a rock—the bed of the stream was not dry; it was full of half-frozen mud—and he was shouting and blowing his whistle to guide the rest of us to him. We all arrived except Hallmuth. We started to search for him after a while, but we had only oil enough for one of our lamps, and we took turns, two or three of us going together in shifts. I don’t know about the others, but I was so tired that I just walked in my sleep. I had to give it up and lie down by the camp fire, but I woke at daybreak, and when I heard that he had not been found I started right out again.

“The sun was up when I came on him, sitting against a boulder beside his dead pony. It had evidently fallen under him, but he had got up and walked five or six feet before he sat down. We could not find any sign of injury on him. He was sitting hatless, with his hands thrust deep into the snow on either side of him, staring ahead of him. I came crawling right up a steep place toward him without seeing him. I was looking for his tracks, and I climbed up over a boulder and stopped to examine the print of a bird’s feet in the snow on top of the boulder. I was interested because we had not seen any birds large enough to be worth shooting, and this was evidently a big one. Then I raised my eyes and saw him watching me. I thought by his look that I had frightened him. He was staring right at me. I said: “What’s the matter, Doctor?

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## SOME DISTINGUISHED AMERICANS

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Did I scare you?" Then I realized that he was dead. He looked as if something had scared him to death. He had been dead about twelve hours, I should say. Heart failure, Cameron said, due to exhaustion and exposure."

Ward laid down the letter. "Well?"

## VII. VANCE COPE

### 1

IT was not so much an automobile as a triumphal car—bright with the theatrical resplendence of a stage super's chain mail—an armored car of polished metal, angular, with conspicuous rivet heads along the seams of its hood. It did not appear to go on wheels, but to float forward, through respectful space, on a subdued murmur of cosmic power. It had suddenly turned the corner of Sunset Boulevard and caught us crossing its path; and it bore down on us like a combination of the German army and the day of judgment. We stood helpless, petrified, fascinated, unable to escape.

Then some miracle happened. It did not seem to notice us, but it stopped haughtily, withholding its might. We had time to jump back out of its way. It proceeded, without effort, without remark, aristocratically ignoring the fact that it had saved our lives. It did not wish to acknowledge any show of gratitude from us, possibly. It was above that sort of cheap emotionalism.

So were the Japanese chauffeur and the footman in livery who reigned together on its front seat, as sacerdotal and aloof as two minor stone gods guarding the portals of an Egyptian temple. The

chief divinity was behind them, in the shadows of the closed limousine, his soft hat drawn down on his eyebrows, staring ahead of him in a Napoleonic gloom, pallid, frowning, and yet, it seemed to me, self-conscious. He had the look of make-believe that you see on the stern mouth of a child who is playing soldiers.

He was borne slowly by, in his imperial ease, and Gadkin said: "That's *him!* That's Cope!"

## 2

We had been talking of him. Inevitably. We were in Los Angeles, and Gadkin was a moving-picture actor. You could as easily be in Washington, in the old days, and not talk of Theodore Roosevelt to a politician. Added to that, I had come to Hollywood to try to write a scenario for Cope, and I was much more eager to hear about him and to do him—to write him up for a magazine—than to do his scenario. I felt that his history—his spiritual history—and the progress of his mental and moral development were truly matters of public concern. And I still feel that they are so.

Or they ought to be so. I suppose the truth is that civilization is never able to keep up, mentally, with its own growth and change. We devote a mediaeval amount of attention to the occupants of our old official thrones and quite ignore the new controlling powers that stand at the royal elbow.

The books on Roosevelt are now filling a memorial library, and what the newspapers printed about him, in his day, if properly chopped and macerated, would overflow all the corn silos in the state of Kansas; yet, of the men and women who really made the public opinion that created Roosevelt, what is there in print? And what of Vance Cope, who, in any theatrical season, affects an audience as large as the accumulated audiences of Shakespeare's three centuries—and inspires as much animating emotion in a year as Roosevelt provoked in thirty—and forms the practical ideals of more young Americans in an afternoon than all the politicians, preachers, teachers, and professors of all the parties, churches, schools, and colleges from here to Hollywood?

You know, really, this man has a terrifying power. He controls a human Niagara Falls of feeling. It is very picturesque and æsthetical to write of him and his output in terms of art criticism, but there is another aspect to his activity. He is turning how many million human power-wheels and producing how many billion volts and amperes of moral energy and emotional charge?

I am not pleading for any moralistic consideration of his work. We have had plenty of that—of the conventional kind—busy with appearances. In his "Samson and Delilah" and again in his "Antony and Cleopatra," it was the appearance of the human body that startled the world. In "Manon Lescaut"

the bodies were satisfactorily muffled up, but naked human passions came into public sight, to the horror of the moralists. In "Her Fine Feathers" they were scandalized to see that life went on after sunset—"night life," they called it, shuddering. Engaged in censoring these appearances, they missed the true point and moral of all four films, which was that woman is always the enemy of man, his trap and betrayer, whether she be Delilah, or Cleopatra, or Manon destroying her lover, or the spendthrift wife in "Her Fine Feathers" bankrupting her fond American husband.

That was a useful poison to be pumping into the young American male mind, wasn't it? I thought so. And I thought it might be worth while to discover why Cope was so full of this antique masculine fear of woman. I believed that if I could trace the origin of the disease in him, and show that it *was* a disease—that it was a morbid exaggeration of a subconscious sex fear as old as the myth about Adam and Eve—the information might make it more difficult for Cope to spread his infection in the cinema theater.

Gadkin helped me, at once, unwittingly. He had some of the information that I needed. He had known Cope in early boyhood, in Chicago, where Gadkin had been a young actor and Cope an usher, after school hours, in the theater in which Gadkin played his first speaking part. Gadkin was the elder. Cope had sought him out, with the timid

## VANCE COPE

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persistence of a boyish hero worship, and Gadkin had patronized him and encouraged him. When Gadkin, in the natural course of his ambition, moved on to New York, he assisted Cope to follow him, got Cope work as a super, taught him some of the mysteries of theatrical make-up, found him a cheap boarding house to live in, and generally showed him the ropes.

Gadkin told of it with angry accusations of ingratitude, because Cope and he had subsequently quarreled. His story consisted more of emotion than of biographic fact. He was an artist, not a historian. Like an epic poet, he began in the middle and pursued his narrative in both directions at once. He jeered and laughed and cursed and was contemptuous. He did not understand Cope at all. Indeed, he misunderstood Cope bitterly. But in the midst of all his impassioned ignorance about Cope, he had several significant clues to an explanation of Cope's character—without knowing that he had them.

### 3

Cope's boyhood, for example. It was easy to reconstruct some of that from Gadkin's misapprehensions.

Vance Cope—John Vincent Cope—Vinny Cope, in his childhood—was the son of a commercial traveler and an actress of a sort. He was born in Chicago about 1880, and he lost his legal father in

his infancy, after a matrimonial quarrel which he remembered as an angry argument, a violent exit, and the entrance of a new dad. He did not like his second father, and the relationship did not last long, though it apparently lasted long enough for the boy to mark himself as an impediment to a mother who was inclined to seek sentimental adventures of a remunerative issue. He was sickly, and she was robustiously indifferent and neglectful of him. He thought her beautiful. She did not conceal it from him that she found him ridiculously spindling and gawky. "At her best," Gadkin said, "I don't believe she was ever more than a show girl. She'd deserted him before I knew him. Said she was going on tour, and never came back."

She probably resented the fact that her life was in danger of being censored—like the plot of a latter-day movie—so as to make it worthy of the admiration of childish innocence. She had no relatives to leave him with, so she abandoned him to the mercies of a boarding house, where she paid for him when she had the money, but left him usually penniless. The public schools tried to give him a free education, but they did not succeed in giving him any appetite for their prescribed information. It followed that while he was still nominally at school he began to work as a theater usher in the evenings and on matinee afternoons.

It followed, also, that he became a sensitive, imaginative, lonely minded boy, physically inade-

## VANCE COPE

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quate to life, starved in his affections, afraid of his school companions, and carrying himself with an offensive trembling pride that was intended to conceal his fear. On a Sunday, in Chicago, wandering around the streets, full of adolescent melancholy, he envied the family groups that he saw on their way to church; and his envy expressed itself to Gadkin as a feeling of superiority to these poor human sheep, passing him in flocks, as if bell-wethered by a church chime. This attitude of contempt, resented by his classmates, brought him most of the persecutions from which he suffered in school. It was a pose that quite deceived Gadkin. Gadkin, I imagine, was flattered by the adulation of so haughty a critic of the rest of the world. He did not suspect that Cope's criticism, like so much of its kind in artists and writers, was the self-protective attack—the militarist's “offensive defensive”—of sensitive weakness.

And he saw as merely laughable Cope's earliest known adventure in love.

In the theater in which Cope first began to work as an usher there was an actress of no great popularity, old enough to be his mother. He must have adored her for some time obscurely, from the back of the house, before he began to imitate the homage of open admiration in the theater, by bringing flowers to the footlights for her. They were expensive bouquets of roses, and though they arrived only once a week, anonymously, on Saturday nights,

they cost him most of his small weekly salary. The third time that he came down the aisle, pale, with his tribute, she sent her maid to ask him who had given him the flowers. There was no card in them, and an envious leading man had spread the rumor that she was sending flowers to herself.

Cope was coolly mysterious and uncommunicative with her maid, and he was summoned to his idol's dressing room after the performance; but by that time he had his story ready. A rich romantic youth had been giving him the roses with instructions not to tell where they came from. No, he could not say where this ardent stranger sat; he sat in different places at different times. Yes, he was there every night, but it was only on Saturday nights that he brought roses. No, he couldn't point him out to her. He had promised not to.

He was vague and agitated and, in one respect, rather queer; he refused to take a tip from her and seemed pained that she should offer it. When she pressed it on him he backed out of the room with a reproachful expression of face.

She must have felt that there was something wrong, for she did not speak of the interview to anyone. It was her maid who talked, and the leading man who investigated. He set the company's press agent to watch Cope; and on the following Saturday night, when Cope arrived with his roses under his overcoat, the press agent had seen him buy them. Before the curtain rose on the

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second act every member of the company on the stage had heard the story. None of them believed that Cope had been buying the flowers with his own money; naturally, they supposed that the actress herself had been paying for them. In the final scene of the act, just before the curtain fell, the leading man whispered to her, "Your flowers are here!" The others alarmed her with sly, cynical smiles. When Cope started down the aisle with his offering, they were all watching for him, and they greeted him with titters.

She pretended not to see him. Cope reached his bouquet up to the footlights, trembling, aware that she was ignoring him and more horribly aware that all the others on the stage were grinning at him. He knew that the audience would realize something was wrong, and he felt them staring at his back while they applauded. He stood there, painfully conspicuous, holding up his foolish bouquet even while the curtain fell and rose again. The leading man came forward at last, and took the flowers from him and offered them to her elaborately, but she ignored them, bowing to the audience, who had begun to laugh without knowing why. The leading man gave the roses to the comedian, who mugged and simpered over them. The house roared. The actress darted a malignant look of fury at Cope. He fled up the aisle through what seemed to him a din of public ridicule.

The press agent said something to him at the  
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back of the house, but Cope was too confused to do more than recognize the expression of derision. He rushed to get his overcoat and ran from the theater. And he never returned. It was in another Chicago theater that Gadkin met him and befriended him.

### 4

Gadkin, as I have said, saw this incident as merely laughable. He was perhaps blind to its importance, because Cope himself spoke of it with laughter when he told Gadkin of it, years after the event. But Gadkin related Cope's second sentimental adventure with the same stupid amusement, although, in its setting and its result, it paralleled the first so exactly that even Gadkin might have divined the existence of a predetermined cause, in Cope himself, for both the scenes.

The second incident happened in New York. When Gadkin arrived there, in the autumn of 1900, he got a small part in a play about royalty at the old Lyceum Theater, on Fourth Avenue. And when Cope followed Gadkin from Chicago, Gadkin's influence with the stage manager of the play pushed Cope into a convenient vacancy among the court uniforms that adorned the third act. The leading woman of that play—as you perhaps remember—was little Janet Nast in the role of the Princess Aline; and the play was “Her Royal Happiness.” You may have forgotten that it was

in the film version of "Her Royal Happiness" that Cope subsequently began his career as a movie director, with Janet Nast as his star. The coincidence is not accidental. Neither was the play's failure on the stage accidental, nor its later success on the screen. All these developments were inherent in the incidents that occurred during Cope's one night on the Lyceum stage.

"Her Royal Happiness" had been billed as a "romantic comedy," and there was probably no intentional deception in the phrase, but the playwright was an Englishman, and he could have had no conception of how romantically romantic the true American is in his imaginative intercourse with kings and queens. Americans get their first idea of royalty from childhood's fairy tales; and, throughout their lives, in spite of their adult better sense, every son of a throne carries for them some of the glamour of a fairy prince, and every royal daughter is apt to move them to mystical protective doting. Furthermore, the Americans of 1900 had been drinking deep of the royalistic distillations of Anthony Hope and Stanley Weyman and Maurice Hewlett and the authors of *To Have and To Hold* and *If I Were King* and *When Knighthood was in Flower*—to name only a few of the most potent. For some hidden reason—a reason that was connected perhaps with a surfeit of commercial success and of devotion to McKinley's "full dinner pail"—the production of court romances had become a national industry

second only to the manufacture of patent aids to indigestion. The output of American humor as an antidote to psychic distress was a poor third; even Mark Twain had been writing *Joan of Arc*.

With such an audience, the English author of "Her Royal Happiness" made a fatal mistake when he wrote about royalty in a manner that was mildly satirical. He drew his king as an amiable crowned bonehead who did and said whatever he was told to do and say by various polite but decided public officials. The queen ruled the palace as the politicians ruled the kingdom; and the whole royal family was disappointingly human and domestic. The little Princess Aline was somewhat more to the popular taste, because she was saved to romance by Janet Nast's prettified stage affectations and by the inability of any self-respecting author of that day to make a young girl human; but here again there was a damning flaw. In the first act she gave her heart to a secret playmate, who was the son of the lodgekeeper or something equally low; and in the last act she was compelled to betroth herself to Prince Albert of Aquitania, and to sacrifice her royal love to her royal duty. Gosh!

The play had been slowly dying of these congenital defects for a month or more when Cope came into it. His participation was not obtained with any hope that he might make a difference. On the previous night one of the supers had hung up his

aide-de-camp's uniform in the supers' dressing room and announced to the captain that he was through—his brother had got him a government job on a mail wagon—and by virtue of Gadkin's backing, Cope came in to fill the empty clothes. That was all.

Gadkin brought him to the theater in the afternoon, and showed him how to make up, and helped him into his costume, and explained to him where he was to enter, and picked out the place where he was to stand on the stage. There was no difficulty about the part; he was one of a dozen supers who were to come on the stage together, stand as a court chorus for fifteen minutes in a throne-room scene, and follow their leader out when the scene was ended. And there was no difficulty about his costume; it was a becoming uniform of robin's-egg blue and it almost fitted him when he inflated his thorax so as to take up the wrinkled slack in the white plastron that buttoned across his breast like a fencer's chest pad. There was some unromantic bagginess about the trousers—and he could not inflate his legs—but the supers' mirror did not show him below the belt, and Gadkin made no criticisms.

Gadkin wanted Cope to hear him during the one speaking moment that the play allowed him, in the second act, so he arranged that Cope should have a seat in the back of the house during the first part of the performance. It would be well for Cope to know what the play was about, anyway; it would help him to look his part in the third; and he could

find his way to his dressing room, toward the end of the second act, in time to be made up and in his place when the curtain rose for the throne-room scene.

These arrangements seemed quite innocent and intelligent, and Gadkin did not suspect that there was anything dangerous in them until he went to the supers' dressing room to see Cope, just before the second curtain, and found that Cope had not yet arrived. Gadkin was himself in costume, so he could not go out front to warn Cope that he must hurry. At the last possible minute he bribed the call boy to find Cope and bring him through the stage door behind one of the first tiers of boxes; but the curtain was down a long time before the boy returned with Cope, dazed and bewildered-looking, and silent under Gadkin's angry remonstrances.

"He looked doped," Gadkin described it. "I almost had to put his clothes on him. I *did* have to button them. There wasn't time to make him up properly, and he had to follow the others upstairs with his sword belt in his hands. I got it buckled on him in the wings just as the curtain rang up, and I shoved him into the procession. The stage manager bawled him out, and so did I, but he didn't seem to hear us."

The throne-room scene was the big emotional scene of the play. It began with some impressive court pomp that led up to a speech from the throne in which the king announced the happy composition

of all his differences with the neighboring kingdom of Aquitania. (Aquitania had been threatening war for two acts.) A treaty of alliance had now been arranged between the two countries and all disputed territory ceded to his crown. To cement the alliance, His Royal Highness the Crown Prince Albert Adolf George Charles Rudolf of Aquitania, etc., had sought in marriage the hand of Her Royal Highness Princess Margaret Ottillia Christina Elizabeth Constantia Helena Aline, etc., etc. His Imperial Majesty was graciously pleased to inform his loyal subjects that the Princess Aline had deigned to look with favor on the royal prince of Aquitania—or something of that sort. And then little Janet Nast cried out, thrillingly, “No!”

In those days Janet Nast could act. Her young imagination had not yet been wholly stifled by the growth of self-consciousness that afterward incased and hardened on her. She could throw herself into her speech of revolt with a high passion, girlish and regal and pathetic, her voice breaking even while her words were defiant, and her head up, though she wept. Ordinarily, she would have carried her audience into a storm of applause; they wept and palpitated with her, as it was; but the playwright, at the top of the excitement, had given the king a ridiculously human line; and all the heroic emotions of the audience got relief in a shout of laughter. The embarrassment of the court was equally laughable. They were funny in their polite attempts to

suppress their excitement and to escape as inconspicuously as possible from the scene of a royal family quarrel. The queen was comic in her domestic anger, blaming the henpecked king; and when she swept out and left him to discipline his offspring, the stage should have been empty for the prettily pathetic scene between father and daughter that was to be followed by the meeting of the princess and her boyish sweetheart, and his renunciation of her, and all the rest of it.

The stage *should* have been empty, I say—but Cope, in his aide-de-camp's uniform, was standing obstinately in his place beside the door at the left. He had remained behind when the others of the court had abandoned the princess to her fate. The queen had seen him from across the stage, but her lines had been too quick and angry to allow her to change her exit so as to take him off with her. She had stormed out through the door right, and then run to warn the stage manager. And when the king began his scene with his daughter the stage manager was audibly cursing Cope through the open doorway and pleading with him to come off the stage.

"Cope looked as if he were hypnotized," Gadkin said, "and his eyes were full of tears, and he was trembling, and you couldn't seem to make him hear a thing. He wasn't going to leave the princess to be forced into a loveless marriage, and that's all there was to it. Funny! It was so funny it nearly

## VANCE COPE

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ruined the play. If Charlie Chatterton hadn't been so clever they'd have had to ring the curtain down."

Chatterton was playing the king. When he saw that Cope was still there, after his first few lines, he crossed to Cope and took him by the elbow, and said, sauvely, "I trust, my dear count, that you will not report this unfortunate incident to His Royal Highness until I've had time to—to—ah—" And at that point he led Cope through the door and gave him to the stage manager.

The stage manager caught him by the collar and rushed him to the dressing-room stairs, and all but threw him down into the basement. "You're fired—both of you," he told Gadkin; and Gadkin flared up and argued with him, forgetting Cope in his own quarrel. He followed the stage manager to his room, and they fought out their anger there, behind closed doors. When they had arrived at laughter and apologies—"After all, it was a hell of a compliment to Janie Nast's acting"—he went to find Cope, but Cope had gone. His uniform of robin's-egg blue was hanging on its hook and he had vanished.

### 5

He had gone to kill himself. Only by killing himself could he make Janet Nast understand the devotion that had inspired him to refuse to turn from her on the stage. Only so could he make her appre-

ciate his holy and uplifted yearning to distinguish himself before her, no matter how madly—to compel her to look at him and be aware of him even if he had to stop the play. He had wanted to be able to say to her: "You were so wonderful, I couldn't—I couldn't turn away." And underneath this impulse of fascinated egotism there was another emotion. All through the first two acts he had been her boyish lover, the lodgekeeper's son. He had been ready to storm the world and tear down every barrier of circumstance in order to win her. The final scene of the second act had warned him that she was to be given to Prince Albert of Aquitania, and he had revolted against that frustration, as the whole disappointed audience had revolted against it. When she rose with her eloquent protest and cried, "No!" he had started and stiffened and exulted for her. It was impossible for him to desert her then. Hypnotized? Yes, but aware of what he was doing, and determined to go through with it, though the whole court turned against him and tried to hoot him off the stage.

It was not until he was thrust down the basement stairs, and tripped over his sword, and fell sprawling on the cement floor outside the supers' dressing room—it was not till the physical shock of this outrage awoke him from his dream—that he realized how absurd he must have seemed to her. To *her*! He did not care about the others; he was not conscious of them; he did not even see the supers in the dress-

ing room; he did not hear their puzzled questions. But absurd to *her!* No, that was not to be endured. And the only way for him to check her laughter was to kill himself. Then she would understand. Then she would appreciate what he was, what he had felt for her, what an indignity had been put upon his devotion to her. Then she would realize—they would all realize—that this thing had not been a silly farce, but a noble and appalling tragedy.

When he left the theater, he was no longer excited. All his emotion seemed to have passed. He had never felt more cool and determined in his life. He turned west on Twenty-third Street, to make his way to the Hudson River and drown himself. He would not take poison; he was not sure that a druggist would sell it to him. He would not shoot himself; he had never handled firearms, and he did not know where to buy a revolver. Drowning was not only the easiest and surest way; it was the most poetic. They would find him in the Morgue, unfigured, peaceful, with an expression of calm pride on his cold lips.

That thought of his body in the Morgue and the sight of some pink-silk underwear in a haberdasher's window combined to remind him that his underclothes were unpresentable. His elbows had worn holes in the sleeves of his undershirt. He had only recently cut off the legs of his winter drawers at the knees, because his kneecaps had come through them. These were not garments that would look

well in a morgue. The pink-silk ones were the proper thing. He would die like a gentleman.

It took all but his last two dollars to buy them, and then he had to go back to his room to put them on. He marked them with his name in ink, so that there might be no doubt of his identity, and he slipped them on with a tragic sort of satisfaction. They felt rich, luxurious. He brushed his clothes and changed his necktie. He wrote his name and address on an envelope and put it in his breast pocket. He would leave no message. (The silence of supreme contempt! At such a moment, a gentleman accused no one.) He brushed his hat and put it on at a defiant angle. (Debonair in the face of death! King Charles going to the scaffold.) He turned out his gas jet with the fateful gesture of immutable finality. (Out, out, brief candle!) He descended the stairs to the street of his doom, aristocratically indifferent to the canaille who had condemned him.

All this, of course, was the first effect of the silk underwear. It had a soothing, flattering sort of whispered touch as he walked; and there rose out of the depths of his physical being a distracting sense of consoled self-sufficiency. He was about to die—yes, but of his own choice, by his own hand, at his own convenience. There was no hurry. He would not falter—no fear of that! He was on Broadway, dressed like a gentleman, with money in his pocket; no reason why he should leave it for some

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attendant in the Morgue to spend. Die like a gentleman! He went into a restaurant.

Food is the very devil for overcoming poetic melancholy. What the pink-silk underwear had begun, a grilled chop and baked potato completed. He sent the waiter for a box of imported cigarettes, paid his bill, and sat back to smoke and sip his coffee. He felt a certain vague reluctance to part so soon with the luxury of silk against the skin. It occurred to him that his underclothes would look too new; that it would be evident he had bought them for the sad occasion. It would make him ridiculous. He foresaw a paragraph in the newspapers: "Young Cope, before committing his rash act, must have invested his last few dollars in a new suit of pink-silk underwear which showed no signs of wear. The police have learned that he bought them in a Twenty-third Street store only a few hours before he launched himself into eternity." Vanity! And laughter! Public laughter! And Janet Nast sorry, pitiful, but a little red and ashamed of him. No. He would have to wear his pink silk for a day or two, and have some money in his pocket when he died. If he could not earn it, he might borrow it from Gadkin and leave a will returning it to him.

So, at least, we may reconstruct Cope's thoughts from what he told Gadkin of the evening, years afterward. At the time he told nothing. When Gadkin came to the boarding house, after the play, he found Cope walking up and down the threadbare

strip of carpet that sufficed to cover the floor of his narrow hall bedroom, calm, uncommunicative, superior, smoking expensive cigarettes. Gadkin tried to be jocular with him about his fiasco as a super. He regarded Gadkin thoughtfully, looked at his cigarette, flicked the ashes on the carpet, and continued on his beat. Gadkin could make nothing of this new man-of-the-world manner; he could not see the pink-silk underwear. He asked Cope what he intended to do. Cope replied, "I'm going to get a position."

"A position? Where?"

"In some office," Cope said. "I'm done with the stage."

Gadkin laughed. "All right. I'll see how you feel about it in the morning. Good night."

But in the morning Cope went out in search of his "position" before Gadkin woke. He was gone all day; and when he returned in the evening he was already an office boy. He had found his place in the play agency—Hart Corwin's play agency—from which he was graduated finally into moving pictures.

### 6

To Gadkin, I repeat, all this was merely laughable. He did not see that Cope's relations with his mother had probably developed a morbid strain in his instinct of affection, so that he unconsciously expected and feared ridicule from any person whom

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he loved; and under the impulse of this unconscious expectation, he put himself into ridiculous situations as a lover, and suffered under and revolted against the laughter that resulted. As a consequence, the emotion of love to Cope was inevitably the "bitter sweet" of those Elizabethan poets who complain so eloquently of their hard-hearted mistresses. And his fear of love included a fascinated fear of woman.

Unfortunately for Gadkin, Cope's instinct of affection ran to this same morbid strain in his friendship. That was why he told Gadkin the ridiculous truth about his affair with the roses, and about the preposterous psychology of his scene in "*Her Royal Happiness*," and the bathetic effect of pink-silk underwear on his suicidal impulse, and all the rest of his absurdities. And, of course, Gadkin laughed at him. And, equally of course, Cope unconsciously hated him for his laughter, just as he hated his mother, and the actress of the roses, and Janet Nast, and everyone else whom he loved. It was certain that his friendship with Gadkin would end in a quarrel. Anyone could have predicted that.

The quarrel came in Los Angeles, during the film production of "*Her Royal Happiness*." Gadkin was playing Prince Albert of Aquitania, with Janet Nast as Princess Aline. Cope had got him the part. Cope, indeed, had engineered the purchase of the play and most of the casting of it. He was now a sort of assistant director and holder of the script for

Ben Spenser, and they prepared the scenarios together as they went along.

"He broke into the film business quite naturally," Gadkin explained with malice. "As Hart Corwin's office boy, he'd had the run of the manuscript plays that came in, and for years he'd been lifting good dramatic ideas out of them, on the side, and selling them to the film companies. Ben Spenser sent for him on the strength of his successful piracies. As soon as they thought of doing '*Her Royal Happiness*,' Cope wrote to me and got me to give up a good job to come out here, damn him."

The engagement of Janet Nast for the filming of "*Her Royal Happiness*" was the sensation of the day. She was one of the first recognized theatrical stars to leave the stage for the movies. The press agent's announcement of her screen salary was printed in the newspaper headlines, and all the dramatic critics viewed her defection with prophetic alarm.

"I don't know where they got the money to pay Mamma Nast the advance on the contract," Gadkin said. "They were operating on a shoestring. They were using an old ranch barn on Sunset Boulevard as a studio, and they bought second-hand sets out of storage in the East for their scenery, and when we went out on location we went in a flock of molting Fords. It was Ben Spenser's first venture on his own. He'd taken the camera man and the studio carpenter into partnership, so as not to have to pay them

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salaries, and Cope wasn't getting more than enough to meet his board bill. They were all living on hope. There's always plenty of it in the air in Los Angeles. There has to be to keep us movie actors alive."

How the quarrel between Cope and Gadkin began I do not know—and it is not important—but I imagine that Gadkin came to Los Angeles with the contempt for the movie business which it was natural for any actor from the legitimate stage to feel at that period of the world's history; and probably his contempt extended to the staff of the studio, including Cope. Cope, in the first flush of their renewal of friendship, had told him the truth about his great moment in the throne-room scene on the stage of the Lyceum, and it was dangerous information for Gadkin; it did not add to his respect for Cope. Gadkin saw himself as a successful and experienced actor, and it fell to Cope to break the news to him that his stage method was not subtle enough for the camera. Ben Spenser had been bawling at him: "Don't mug it, man! Don't mug it!" And Gadkin was not in a mood to accept criticism meekly from a theater usher who had made a fool of himself as a super.

The final break came when Cope tried to change the part of Prince Albert of Aquitania by proposing that the lodgekeeper's son should be a prince in disguise and that the film should end with the Princess in his arms. This would take the leading male role away from Gadkin and give it to the other lover.

It would make Gadkin a sort of comic heavy, outwitted and absurd. "And you can tell the world," Gadkin said, "he didn't do *that* to me without a fight."

The fight grew and spread until it involved about everyone in the company. All took sides, according to their interests. Making a film is a difficult collaboration that commonly includes an author, a producer, a director, some scenario writers, a number of actors, the publicity man, and all their friends and followers; they collaborate as the Allies worked together on the treaty of Versailles — each for himself and the result for the unhappy world. The author stands in the place of President Wilson—when all is over, he gets the blame. In the case of "Her Royal Happiness," the author was mercifully dead.

The Nasts agreed with Cope in his plan for rewriting; and Spenser himself at first accepted Cope's idea, having been persuaded that it was his own. But he was already a little jealous of Cope, because Cope was always suggesting just such horrible popular improvements as this—improvements that might better have occurred to Spenser himself—and now, in the excitement of a studio argument with Gadkin, Cope appealed to Janet Nast for support instead of to Spenser. That was a mistake, and Gadkin took advantage of it. He got Spenser alone at the first opportunity and told him the story of Cope's previous effort to change the plot of "Her

Royal Happiness," and his subsequent attempt to die for Janet Nast, and the interference of his pink-silk underwear.

And Spenser went off into cavernous roars of laughter. He had noticed, in the intimacy of his work with Cope, that no matter how shabbily dressed Cope might be, he always wore "silk undies." Ho-ho! Spenser had heard of Mormons wearing sacred underwear, but this! Ho-ho! He was so amused and contemptuous that he promptly made two mistakes himself; he told the story to Janet Nast and he failed to tell it to her mother.

Mamma Nast was what is called "a cannibal mother" in the studios. She lived remorselessly on the flesh of her child, kept all Janet's earnings, gave her only pocket money, watched the men around her like a Spanish duenna, and jealously banished any companionship that threatened her sole control of her child's life. If Spenser had told his tale to Mamma Nast, Cope would have disappeared from Janet Nast's company like a harem traitor in Stamboul. Spenser was kept silent, I suppose, by the fact that Mamma Nast and he were not on joking terms.

When he told Janet Nast, in chuckling confidence, she looked confused and changed the subject. She made no comment to him and she gave no sign to Cope. She kept to herself whatever thoughts she had, said nothing to her mother, and went through the afternoon's work in the studio, deaf to Spenser's

sly references to pink-silk underwear and blind to Cope's air of persecuted depression.

Cope had lost his fight. Spenser had decided that the Prince of Aquitania was to marry the Princess Aline, and Gadkin played his scenes with more than royal self-complacency. But that night Cope was summoned by Mamma Nast to her suite in the hotel, and two days later the company heard that the Nasts had bought out Spenser and his partners; that they were going to complete the film according to Cope's plan; that Gadkin and all his partisans were out of power; and that Cope was the producing manager of the new "Janet Nast International Film Producing Corporation."

## 7

All this, of course, was ancient history before I arrived in Los Angeles. Already, to the studios, "Her Royal Happiness" was an old, early, museum masterpiece. Thanks to Cope's rewriting, it had been an enduring popular success, one of those steady small-town successes that make fortunes for picture producers. None of Cope's later films had topped it. "Samson and Delilah" had been a Broadway riot; so had "Antony and Cleopatra"; and these two productions had made Cope famous abroad—particularly in France, where the "fear-of-woman" theme is always soul satisfying—but Puritan America had found no psychic comfort in

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either film; and "Manon Lescaut" was almost a failure financially.

"He's done," Gadkin exulted. "He never *had* anything, anyway. The public's tired of the big spectacular and the costume film, but that isn't the real trouble with Cope. He put himself over with that stuff, but he had nothing behind it. He has no heart, no sympathy, nothing but conceit. He tried to do the real thing in 'Her Fine Feathers'—real American heart-throb drama—and look at it! They tell me he lost money on it. And he's ruined Janie Nast. He's had her playing cold-blooded little vamps until the public hates her. If you go into pictures with Cope, you'll never get anywhere. He's done, I tell you. He's done."

Gadkin was a human being until he talked about Cope. Then he became all the furies, a woman scorned, and the villain in a war film. You had to discount everything he said by at least 90 per cent. Even so, I was afraid that he was right about Cope's being "done" when I saw how things were at the studio. The spirit of Mamma Nast pervaded the whole place, and it was a spirit of selfish pettiness that begot nothing but bitterness and disloyalty. Janet Nast was known as "Nasty Janie" and her mother's nickname was unreportable. Cope was out of touch with his staff. They despised him secretly because the Nasts appeared to dominate him, and he refused to hear any complaints against their rule; consequently, he gave the effect of being unap-

proachable in the midst of palace grievances that sapped the loyalty of his aides. And he had repellent peculiarities of temperament. I saw one of them during my second week at the studio.

He had come there, that morning, to direct the scene of a fancy-dress ball. The company were all waiting for him, and they greeted him according to the privileges of their positions as he moved around among them, looking them over, chaffing them, flattering them, or criticizing them. Tall, thin, in dark clothes, a black stock tied twice around his collar, one lock of dark hair down on his forehead, pale, he made an ascetic, a scholarly, a poetic figure against his background and surroundings. But the contrast seemed to me too obviously designed and self-conscious. He smiled too much with his lips and not enough with his eyes. When he listened seriously, he had an intense abstracted gaze that was too affectedly direct and concentrated.

Cuthbert Anderson, his new leading man, was talking to me as Cope approached. They were on friendly terms; they had not quarreled; but Anderson whispered to me: "I'm not going to say 'Good morning' to him till he says it to me. Watch what happens."

As Cope came in our direction Anderson pretended to be interested in the hang of a peasant's sheepskin, which he was pulling forward and hitching around on his shoulders, unaware of Cope's approach. Cope nodded to me—he had already

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spoken to me in his office—but he went by without greeting Anderson. After he had passed, Anderson looked at me and winked. We continued our conversation. In a few minutes Cope returned toward us, but this time Anderson was busy with the cross gartering on his peasant ankle. Cope passed again without speaking. I asked Anderson, “Why are you doing it?”

“I want to make him speak to me first.”

“Why?”

“The other day, when I said ‘Good morning,’ he pretended not to hear me. He does it every now and then to somebody—just to humiliate them. He gets you fond of him by being as sweet as can be, and then he does something like that—snubs you. He keeps these young people in a little hell of small cruelties, mixed with kindnesses that you can’t resist.”

Everyone was ready to go on with the scene, but Cope did not begin it. He continued moving about, rearranging furniture unnecessarily, readjusting lights, and passing and repassing Anderson, who continued to miss every opportunity to greet him. The whole thing was done so clandestinely that I supposed no one was aware of it but ourselves. Certainly nothing in Cope’s manner betrayed it; he must have been uncertain whether Anderson was doing it purposely or not. But after at least half an hour’s delay Janet Nast, in the costume of a Fellah woman, came over to us as if casually, con-

fronted Anderson, and said, "Will you please say 'Good morning' to him and let us get to work?"

He laughed. "All right."

She left, unsmiling.

"She's on to him," he explained.

The next time that Cope passed us Anderson addressed a cheerful greeting to him. Cope answered as if he had not noticed Anderson before, talked with us a moment, and then called for the scene. I felt sorry for him. With such a childishly sensitive egotism, how he must suffer! And make others suffer! Janet Nast, for instance. By what disillusioning experience had her understanding of him been acquired?

She was not at all as I had expected to find her. I had seen her on the screen as a little dark Delilah, inscrutable, faintly smiling, treacherous, with some secret personality of her own that remained a mystery. And she had repeated the same effect of hidden mind and purpose in her Cleopatra. An Oriental idol, honey brown, moving only her slow eyes, borne solemnly in procession or enthroned on something like an altar, she had given the impression of being inexplicably adored and malevolent, wooden and cruel. As Manon, the mystery became a secret and unexplained discontent: she deserted her lover in a sort of restless dissatisfaction with existence, and she returned to him in the same mood; in her death scene in the desert, she gazed out over the sands as if that desolation were the picture of her

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life; and she closed her eyes on it, indifferent to her lover's agonized embraces, equally bored by life and death. What was at the heart of this mystery in her?

Now that I saw her in the flesh, she seemed to be merely an ordinary young woman, with a pale olive complexion and a light and commonplace voice, earning her living by allowing Cope to direct her to his own ends in scenes which she did not appear to take the trouble to understand. He dictated every gesture, every change of expression for her, planning his effects without consulting her, and studying them, without her, in the "daily rushes" that were shown him in the projection room. He seemed to be using her as a flexible and expressive marionette. The deepening lines of discontent in her face must have dictated the type of character that could be imputed to her in his pictures, but that dissatisfaction seemed to me no more than the expression of her own vacuity.

I was supposed to be learning how scenarios are written and acquiring what the studio called "the picture point of view." To that end, I was loafing around the lot, watching the rehearsals and the work before the camera, observing the daily rushes in the projection room, sitting in editorial conference among the scenario writers, and helping to edit the titles. And I had been invited to take sides in an unexpected dispute.

The picture on which they were working was a

film version of Daudet's *Sappho*, which Cope had tentatively called "Even as You and I." He had first planned to end the story as Daudet ended it, with Sappho returning to her convict lover and Jean deserted at the quay in Marseilles. But after doing the scenes between Jean and his young fiancee, Irene (played by Mary Merivale), Cope had proposed to end the film with Jean married to Irene and living happily ever after. His scenario staff accepted this cheerful alteration enthusiastically, but Mamma Nast objected, for obvious reasons. She and Cope and Janet had a long private wrangle, and the issue of it was still in doubt. Meanwhile, Cope had begun to photograph the opening scene in the novel—the fancy-dress ball in Déchelette's studio, at which Jean and Sappho first met. And I was puzzled.

I was puzzled to know why Cope should have proposed to desert his favorite "fear-of-woman" theme in "*Sappho*" and end it with Sappho's victim consoled in the arms of a young wife. The editorial staff could give me no light. They saw simply that the new ending would be popular with everybody except the Nasts; and they wanted a popular ending and they longed to see the Nasts humiliated. Cuthbert Anderson, the young leading man, was aware of nothing but his own personal conflict with Cope's peculiarities; I doubt whether he knew what the film was about. I did not see that Janet Nast was much more intelligent. I could hardly ask her mother.

Mamma Nast, as the fancy-dress ball began, retreated to her canvas chair beside Janet's stage dressing table, where she sat, silently critical, watching the world. She never interfered with Cope's direction. She had a part in all the financial doings of the corporation, of course; and she was always quarreling with the publicity staff; and she had to pass upon the scenarios and the continuities before they were accepted for her daughter; but as soon as a scene was begun she withdrew behind her daughter's throne and let the puppet move through the gestures that had been agreed upon.

At a little distance from Mamma Nast and farther in the background, Mary Merivale was sitting on a bench against the wall. She was not taking part in the ballroom scene; as Irene Bouchereau she did not enter the story until years later. She was in her street clothes, but without her hat, and her small brother—a child of five or six—was leaning against her knee. She was not more than eighteen years old, herself, but she made an ideal picture of young maternity, posing with her arm around the boy, placidly watching the busy scene at which he stared so round-eyed. Then Cope, in passing, stopped a moment to speak to her, and she stood up, her hand on the boy's shoulder, smiling at Cope. It was an extraordinary smile, without a tremor of self-consciousness, trusting and grateful, meek to the point of adoration, and flushed with unembarrassed pleasure. It gave

me a sudden suspicion of the truth, and I looked away to see whether anyone else had noticed it. Mamma Nast had; and its reflection seemed to glint illuminatingly in the hard eye with which she regarded it.

I felt sorry for Mary Merivale. I confess it proudly. I was probably the last person in America to have the privilege of pitying that triumphant young woman. I went over to her bench and sat beside her, out of some vague desire to shield her from Mamma Nast.

She greeted me with no such smile as she had given Cope. She seemed shy. She kept her eyes on the child and spoke in a low, composed voice that was hardly audible. It was like the abashed voice of a country girl on her first visit to city relatives. And she *was* a country girl—almost. She had come from the little town of Findellen, in New Jersey. I knew Findellen.

Really?

I knew it as a name on a station signboard. I had never been on a train that stopped there.

We were a long way from home.

She admitted it without any wistful regret. There had been nothing to keep her in Findellen. She was an orphan, and little Billy was dependent on her. As long as he was a baby she could support him. But how was she to educate him in Findellen as he grew up? "

She was naturally reluctant to talk about herself,

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but she was delighted to talk about Billy. He was her pride, her motive power, her excuse for being. She had worked for him, as a waitress in the only hotel in Findellen; and it was to amuse him that she had gone wearily at night to the moving-picture theater that offered Findellen its only public entertainment. There she had seen him on the screen—or a boy who was not half so sweet and cute and knowing as he—and she had begun to save for the purpose of bringing him to Los Angeles some day. She had intended to work as a waitress and to send him to school on the money that he might earn in the studios during the summer holidays.

You should have heard her account of her trip across the continent. She started from Findellen with everything she owned in two straw suitcases and a number of paper boxes tied with string, ignorant, trusting, unprepared for any difficulty. And the traveling world helped her as if she and Billy were two infants consigned in the conductor's care, with shipping tags in their buttonholes. They journeyed in day coaches. She lived on the charity of her fellow passengers because she had only enough money left to buy Billy milk and biscuits after she had paid for their railroad tickets. Some one gave her money; unknown to her, it was tucked into the pocket of her jacket as it lay on the seat. A train-man refused to let her pay for Billy's food, which he ordered from the dining car. A woman took Billy

into her Pullman berth at night so that he might have a comfortable bed.

When she arrived in Los Angeles she had not even street-car fare. She said good-by to her railroad friends, left her baggage in the station, and set out to walk to the nearest studio with Billy. The nearest studio was Cope's. And she walked through the casting director's office to Cope, and through Cope to a small lead in *Sappho*, without any idea of what a miracle her progress was. In spite of all the impeding press and struggle of competitive ambitions around her, she had continued to move forward blindly, in the sublime soft-voiced confidence of complete ignorance. As a picture actress she was a director's dream. When she played a scene, she seemed to hear and see nothing but Cope, alone with him, unaware even of the camera, expressing instantly any emotion that he asked for, with absorbed naturalness. And she did not think of herself as an actress at all. She was only in the studio to find an opening for Billy. Was I writing a story for Mr. Cope? Would I put a part for Billy in it?

Naturally, I replied that I should like to put a part for her in it, too. She rather frowned over that, until I explained that Billy would probably act better with her than with anyone else. "Yes," she agreed, much pleased. "I think he would."

If we put them in as mother and child, would she be able to act the mother?

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"I ought to be able to," she said. "I'm the only mother he's ever had."

What had become of his mother?

His mother had deserted him. She had deserted them both, but Mary spoke of her always as "Billy's mother," not her own, until I supposed she was speaking of her stepmother, and she corrected me.

I forget, now, how the details of the story came out. I was so excited by discovering the resemblance between her history and Cope's that my recollection of the conversation is confused. Her mother had been a show girl who retired from Broadway to a bungalow in Findellen when she married a New York commuter. There had been several quarrels and separations between them before Billy was born. Then the father was killed in a street accident and the mother went back "on the road." She ceased sending them money. They had not heard from her for years.

"Did you tell this to Cope?" I asked.

"Why?"

I was just wondering.

"Yes," she said. "I told him when I asked him for a part for Billy. I told him I was sure that Billy would be able to act, because his mother was an actress. And he asked me about her, and I told him."

"What did he say?"

She looked at me, puzzled. "Nothing."

"Didn't he say that Billy was lucky to have you?"

That startled her. "Yes," she said. "How did you know?"

I went to luncheon with some members of the scenario department, but I was so full of my discovery that I wanted to talk rather than eat. I had a theory not only about Cope and Mary Merivale and Janet Nast, but about the movies; and I wanted to air it. It was a theory involving the subconscious mind, our dream mind that makes dream pictures for itself while our conscious intelligence is asleep, just as the moving-picture screen makes day-dream pictures for us, waking, in the theater. I wanted to point out that this subconscious mind thought in symbols, and that, whether we were awake or sleeping, we responded to those symbols with automatic and ungovernable emotions. I wanted to argue that Janet Nast had become a repellent symbol to the American public because she had been cast as a "vampire" so often that she was a symbol of fear —of sex fear. But I started by pointing out that the movie vamp had lost her popularity; that the most popular American actress on the stage or the screen was always the one who made the least sexual appeal. And before I could get any farther we were lost in a squabble about Puritanism and censorship.

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I succeeded only in saying that Mary Merivale was worth ten Janet Nasts to a picture producer because she had the face of a young Madonna and because the mother symbol is all powerful in the American mind. "If you're going to make money in this studio," I predicted, foolishly, "you'll have to drop Janet and the vamps and get busy with Mary and a little mother love."

Anyone who talks that way in a moving-picture studio is a simple soul. Janet Nast met us coming out of the projection room, in the afternoon, and asked me to have dinner with her mother and her, that evening. And I suspected that some one had reported our conversation to her.

I could only congratulate myself that my theory about Cope and her and Mary Merivale had not got into the argument. It was this:

Janet was as full of unconscious and repressed hatred of *her* mother as Cope of *his*. Any child to whom a mother is cruel has that hatred, and Mamma Nast had been cannibal cruel to Janet. Who else had so suppressed her and used her and dominated her and prevented her from getting a life of her own and love and children? Here was the secret of her dissatisfaction and her expression of inexplicable discontent. When she heard that Cope had once tried to kill himself for love of her, she must have seen in him a possibility of happiness and escape. But, unfortunately, she appeared to Cope with her mother beside her, and Cope must have responded

to them both with the mingled fear and aversion that he had felt for his own mother. He must have seen Mamma Nast as Janet grown old. And in his fear of Janet he had cast her always as the symbol of his fear of woman, in "Samson and Delilah" and "Antony and Cleopatra" and all the rest.

With Mary Merivale it was quite another matter. She came to him, leading by the hand a boy who might have been himself. She was the symbol of everything that his mother should have been; and at the same time he could project on her and Billy the self-pity that was at the base of his sensitive egotism. No wonder he wanted to change the end of "Sappho" so that he—in the person of Jean—might find an imagined happiness in her arms.

You think that this is fanciful? Well, at least it has the merit of explaining what now began to happen.

The dinner with the Nasts was to be an informal family affair at seven, and they assured me that I did not need to dress. "Don't you believe it," Gadkin warned me at the hotel. "Mamma Nast used to be a wardrobe woman and she always dines in state."

He had further information to offer. The Nasts had a toy manor house in the Beverly Hills district, where Janet lived isolated with her mother and a retinue of servants, as detached from the business of housekeeping as if she were the one guest in a summer hotel. She was driven to the studio with her mother, every morning, in a limousine up-

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holstered in plum purple to match the chauffeur's livery and the lap robes; and the machine started and stopped on her mother's orders, transporting Janet like a passenger in a Pullman car over a road that she had seen too often. She ate under her mother's eye; she slept in a room off her mother's; she came occasionally to a Hollywood dance with her mother, sat beside her, danced before her, and departed at her word and under her wing. Like many of the successful moving-picture stars, she did not belong to any fast set in Hollywood. She had no dissipations. She had no life of her own at all, so far as Gadkin had been able to see. She read the motion-picture magazines and talked the gossip of the motion-picture studios. She did not read the newspapers; she let her mother's breakfast-table comment tell her what was in them. She did not seem to Gadkin to be repressed, but empty. If she spoke to few in the studio, they might think it was because she was proud, but he was sure it was because she had nothing to say. "You'll enjoy your dinner," he ended. "It 'll be more fun than a funeral."

As a matter of fact, it was a highly edible dinner, well cooked and well served, with flowers and shaded candles and assorted glasses and large complexities of cutlery and all the other stage properties of careful elegance as you see it depicted in the films—including two of the prettiest dining-room maids in Los Angeles, where every waitress seems to have

arrived with the ambition and the physical credentials of a movie actress. Gadkin was right about one thing: the dinner frocks were thoroughbred. Mrs. Nast looked the white-haired, high-nosed aristocrat, and Janet was everything you could ask of birth and beauty. The maids waited on her with a respectful air of envious adoration. She accepted their offers of food as she accepted my offers of conversation, absent-mindedly, listening to her mother, whom she appeared intent on drawing out for me and exhibiting at her best.

In response to this insistent attention, Mamma Nast took her seat at the head of the conversation and proved her right to it. She talked like a keen old wine-drinking dowager, and before the dinner was over I had nothing but respect for her. She knew that a war had broken out in Europe, and she was the first person I had met in Hollywood who seemed to have heard of it. She was interested in national politics. She was eager to hear all the latest theatrical gossip from Broadway. But whether you discussed the war, politics, or the stage, it was useless to talk to her in terms of what you had read in the newspapers. She had the hard-boiled manner of taking it for granted that newspaper men wrote only for public consumption, and she wanted to know the inside story that lay behind the newspaper's presentable facts. If you had no inside story to give, she moved on in search of a topic that you knew something about.

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When the coffee was served she rose briskly. "I don't drink it," she said. "It spoils my after-dinner nap. Excuse me. I need a few minutes' sleep. I'll be down again before you leave."

Janet watched her go. "We'll take our coffee in the garden," she told the maid. "And bring the cigarettes." She looked at me for almost the first time and smiled in her own right.

One side of the dining room opened through glass doors upon a tile-paved veranda with a Moorish awning. Steps went down to the lawn; and across the grass, among the flower beds, there was a sort of glorified summerhouse like a small Greek temple, where a flying Mercury stood on tiptoe over a pool of water plants. Janet led us in procession to this pillared arbor, the maids following with cushions for the stone exedra seats and a wicker serving table for the coffee. "Don't turn on the light," Janet said. And she explained to me: "My eyes are so tired from the Kliegs."

The inevitable movie moon was shining, and I could see all the flowers of all the four seasons blooming together around us, in the mad liberated way that flowers have in southern California. I thought of remarking that the climate seemed to have a similar effect of emancipation upon the Easterners who came to Los Angeles; but, on second thoughts, it sounded rather too sociological as a beginning for conversation under the circumstances. In that dim diffusion of reflected moonshine, Janet looked like

the patron saint of all young romantic poets. I did not know what to say to her. She poured coffee, and passed a cup to me, and settled back against the cushions and the curved stone seat. I struck a match less to light a cigarette than to occupy a pause of awkward hesitation. She waited, her eyes on the flame. As soon as I blew it out she asked, breathlessly, "Is he in love with that girl?"

### 9

For a moment I had not the vaguest notion what she was talking about, but I understood as soon as I had asked, "Who?"

Cope, of course! She said his name in a flattered tone. I did not need to have her identify "that girl" as Mary Merivale.

It struck me that she was being rather offensively frank in asking a stranger such a question, and I decided resentfully to reply with a frankness equally offensive. I said: "Yes, but I don't believe he knows it."

She drew her scarf up on her shoulders as if she felt suddenly cold, and, wrapping it around her, she sat in silence, staring out at the moonlight. I waited for her. It was *her* conversation. I had not begun it.

She asked, at last, "How do you know it?"

How did I know it? I coughed over the cigarette. "Well," I said, "it's inevitable. It's subconscious.

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She happens to be the irresistible starting-signal to his instinct of affection."

She turned her head to see me. "What?"

That was all right. She asked it as if she suspected I was crazy. I thought to myself: "Well, let's see if I am. Let's see whether this theory will stand trial. If there's anything in it, she'll find some way to put it to the test. Let her have it." So I drew my lungs full of smoke, and I began.

I told her what I knew of Cope's youth and his relations with his mother. She asked, "How do you know *this?*" and I replied, "You'll have to take my word for it."

I told her what I had learned of Mary Merivale, and pointed out the parallel between Mary's childhood and Cope's. I dissected Cope's instinct of affection and I showed her how morbidly it worked. She said, "That's all absurd."

I recounted his affair with the actress of the roses and compared it with his behavior with herself, in the throne-room scene on the stage of the Lyceum. She let her scarf slip from her shoulders and leaned forward listening.

I traced the origin of his subconscious fear of women, showed how it began with his mother, developed it through both the stage incidents, and exposed it full grown in the theme of his moving pictures. I identified her to herself as a symbol for this sex fear in him and showed her how she acted on him as a surrogate for her mother and his. She

put her clenched fist to her lips and said in a low tone something that sounded like, "Damn her!"

I explained how Mary Merivale escaped suspicion by being the guardian angel of little Billy, in whom Cope unconsciously saw his childhood self. "And that," I said, "is why, for the first time, he wants to abandon his fear-of-woman theme and end his picture in a happy marriage. If he doesn't marry her, I don't know what 'll stop him. Not ridicule. As a man of thirty-five, it 'll be ridiculous for him to marry a child of eighteen, but unconsciously he seeks to be ridiculous in love. It seems to me that the whole thing is inevitable. She's in love with him. The first attempt to interfere between them will merely precipitate the end. It 'll bring to the surface all this unconscious emotion that he's unaware of now. He'll realize that he wants to marry her in fact, instead of imaginatively in the plot of a picture."

It convinced her, apparently. Certainly it gave her thought. She hunched forward, her elbows on her knees, her face in her hands, looking down at her feet. After a long silence, she asked, hoarsely: "How about me? What's the matter with me?"

I suppose the moonlight had affected me. I could not have felt more impersonal if we had been a pair of disembodied spirits, sitting in pale spiritual glory, looking back at the world that we had left hanging moonlike over us.

"I don't know you," I said. "I only see that

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you're unhappy and dissatisfied. You're full of suppressed hatred and revolt against your mother—and it can't come out against her, because you love her, so it comes out against everyone else and makes you disliked."

"They call me 'Nasty Janie,'" she said, chokingly, "behind my back."

"Yes. That's inevitable, too. If you could realize that you've a perfect right to hate your mother, so long as you don't make her unhappy by showing it; if you could let it into your mind, so long as you kept it out of your conduct—that would help you. It would make you more pleasant with everybody else. And it'd change your expression. Your dissatisfaction with life is showing on the films. It's in your face. It's going to spoil your whole career."

She brought me back from impersonality with a cry of scorn. "Career!" She threw her hands out at nothing. "It's empty! That's what it is—empty! I haven't anything—any life. Look at it! What is it?" Tears strangled her. She began to beat on her knee with her fist. "I can't! I can't go on! I won't! If he marries her—I'll kill myself. I'll kill myself! It'd serve her right." She meant her mother. "She's—she's done it. She's prevented me. She's kept everybody away from me." And she broke down, sobbing.

There was nothing to do but let her cry it out. I went on talking. "Your mother's done what

everybody does. She's tried to keep you altogether for herself, the way we all do with anyone we love. She's pathetic. For all her cleverness, she's a pathetic old woman. She sees that you're unhappy and she doesn't know why. If she understood it, she'd do anything you wanted. You don't need to worry about her. She'll be all right. She has a mind. And it's a mind that you need—a business mind—to protect you from the people who would take advantage of you if she weren't watching. Let her manage the business part of your life, and you look after the rest of it yourself."

"There isn't any," she sobbed.

"Then make some."

"How?"

"Find some one you can love, and marry him."

"I don't want to marry anyone but *him*."

"Cope?"

She nodded tearfully.

"Well then, marry him."

"How?"

"I don't know," I said. "That'll take some thinking. You'll have to do consciously what Mary Merivale has done without knowing it. You'll have to resymbolize yourself, make yourself a symbol of pity and affection to him instead of a symbol of sex fear. It may not be possible, but it's worth trying."

At any rate, it stopped her weeping. She sat up, dabbing at her eyes with her handkerchief. And very foolishly, I began to suggest a plan of campaign.

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First, she ought to go to Cope and withdraw her opposition to his happy ending of the "Sappho" film. She should try to do that in such a way as to take his side tacitly against her mother. And she might propose that as Sappho she should realize where Jean's happiness lay and sacrifice herself in order to send him to his bride. That would give her a conspicuous part in the happy ending, and it would help to resymbolize her not only with Cope, but with the public. "The important thing," I said, "is to contrive to do all this in opposition to your mother, so that Cope will feel that you're taking *his* part against *her*."

Then she ought to take advantage of the fact that, like Cope himself, she was the child of a cruel parent. "Let him project his self-pity on you, instead of on Mary Merivale. You ought to be able to work that out in the fight about the happy ending. Tell him you hate your mother, if you want to. Appeal to him in any way you please. Ask him to protect you against her. You can make up with her later."

And she should mark herself, at once, as the friend and protector of Mary Merivale and little Billy. "They're probably living in some cheap boarding house. Get them out of it. Bring them here if you can, to live with you. Don't let her dress in that little coop in the studio. Take her into your dressing-room bungalow. And mother Billy. Let Cope see you. Have Billy with you whenever Cope

is around. But be careful. You'll have to win Mary first, or you'll have her jealous of you and the boy."

"It's—it's hypocritical," she said.

"Not at all. It can't be done hypocritically. The boy particularly. You can't deceive a child. He'll see through you at once if you only pretend affection and good will for him. So will Mary. She's no fool. People sense good will and affection even when it's hidden under a forbidding manner. You know that. In the same way, they sense the opposite of good will even when you disguise it. It's only the public that can be deceived by appearances. The people you live with know you better than you think. If you love Cope, he knows it. He's afraid of you and you'll have to win him by making Mary Merivale and Billy and all these other people love you."

"I don't dislike them," she defended herself.

"All right, then. Let them see it and make them fond of you. Hate your mother and love everybody else."

She said, in a new tone: "I don't really hate her. She didn't know what she was doing. She didn't see—any more than I did."

"Good. If you've come as far as that, the rest should be easy."

She thought a moment. Then she added: "I don't dislike *you*—even after what you've said about me—here and at the studio."

"You mean at luncheon?"

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She said, forgivingly, "Yes."

I laughed. "It doesn't make any difference to me. I'm only telling you the truth. I like, immensely, the way you've taken it."

"Then you'll help me?"

"Certainly. All I can."

"You can help me a great deal. You can come with me now and see Vance—Mr. Cope—with me."

"What about?"

"About changing the ending of the film."

"I will," I said, "in a hog's valise."

"What does that mean?"

"It's Irish for 'not on your life.'"

"But you *must*." She rose and came to me.

"Impossible."

She sat down beside me and put her hand on my arm, almost childishly. "You're the only person that's ever tried to help me. It's the first time anyone has ever told me the truth about myself. I want to change. I want people to like me. I want to be affectionate—and happy."

"You're wangling me," I said.

Her eyes glinted mischievously. "You like me. I know you do, or you wouldn't have taken so much trouble with me."

"You're a hypocrite. You're flattering me. You're trying to flirt with me."

She began to laugh. "Come on. It'll be fun. Come and help me. You started me. You'll have to see me through.

“What are you going to do?”

“Come along and see.”

She had me by the sleeve. She pulled me to my feet and started off with me. I went like a dog on a rope, planting myself in an obstinate protest every now and then, and being coaxed and jerked along with determined high spirits.

“I’m a writer,” I complained, “not a psychiatrist. I can’t help you with Cope.”

“Then come and see a movie queen snaring her mate. You can write it up—after I’ve landed him.”

“Don’t be so forward. Let go my hand.”

“You’d better come or I’ll put my arm around you.”

“Heaven forbid!”

We were at the dining-room door. “I’ll go,” I said, “if you tell me exactly what you plan to do—and to say.”

“I’ll tell you in the ear,” she cried. “Get your coat on. I’ll run upstairs and explain to mother that we’re going for a little drive in the moonlight.”

And while she was upstairs a miracle happened. After I had put on my overcoat in the hall, my mind began to work. I had an idea.

“Listen,” I said, as she came downstairs swiftly to me. “I want you to recall something. What was the color of the costume you wore in the throne-room scene of ‘Her Royal Happiness’? I mean in the stage production.”

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She tilted her head prettily and closed one eye.  
“Pink!”

“Pink? Not really!”

“Yes. Pink silk.”

“Fine! Have you a pink dress you can put on?”

“Don’t be ridiculous. I can’t wear pink any more.”

“Why not?”

“Where are your eyes?” She indicated the dark-brown wave over her ear. “I used to have fair hair as a child and they blondined it.”

“Were you fair haired as the Princess Aline?”

“Certainly.”

“Oh, gosh!” That was a knockout. “Mary’s fair.”

“Of course.”

“I’ll bet Cope has a fair-haired love image.”

“A what?”

“Never mind. Have you anything at all pink that you can wear?”

She began to shake her head, and stopped.  
“I’ve a silk sweater—a sort of rose pink.”

“Great! The very thing. Put that on.”

She started upstairs again to get it, and then another miracle happened. I had another idea.  
“Wait! Have you a blond wig?”

She turned on the stair to confront me, flushed and spunky. “Now listen to me. If I can’t get him without wearing a blond wig, I’ll die an old maid.”

"All right," I said. "I don't think he's good enough for you, anyway. His taste is immature."

She made a face at me. "Talk about flirting. Wait a minute till I get the sweater. I have a blond wig at the studio. I'll find it to-morrow, if you'll tell me why you want it."

"I'll tell you on our 'little drive in the moonlight.'"

10

The car was what is called a landaulet, I think; and the chauffeur, sitting outside, got most of the moon. Cope had built himself a Spanish rough-cast, on a foothill above Clearwater Cañon, and the drive to his house ought to have been magnificent with mountain vistas as we ascended the ravine, and with wide moonlit panoramas as we came out on the hilltops. What I saw of it was only a blurred background for Janet Nast. She had put on her silk sweater and a jaunty old-rose sports cap that looked like a soldier's, and she was as full of the devil as a Hollywood flapper on her way to a hootch party.

"Why must I wear pink?" she asked.

"Because you wore pink when he first fell in love with you. And then pink-silk underwear saved his life."

She remembered the story and shrieked with laughter. "I'll get some pink things," she cried. "Camisoles and shoulder ribbons and ——"

"That 'll do."

"Prude! Puritan! Step-ins!"

"The word is new to me. Now get down to business. I want you to play a blond in his next picture—in a yellow wig and all the pankest pink you can find."

"I hate pink, too."

"And don't give it up after you marry—the way girls give up the piano. And if you can't sleep in a blond wig, wear a pink-silk boudoir cap."

She shrieked again.

"Now be serious. Here's what you have to do to-night." And I began to lay out our next scene.

She listened with smiling gravity, in high color, like a child just come into school from the playground. We planned out the whole act carefully. "And don't overdo it," I cautioned her. "Play it to me as much as you can, and just take him in as a spectator."

"I can act a little," she said, demurely. "I was on the stage when I was younger."

"I'm told you were fierce. Besides, this isn't acting. It's life. Nothing's worse than the actress who acts off the stage. You try acting with Cope and he'll know it before you get through your entrance speech."

"That's true," she said, sobered. "I'll just try to feel it, and not to think it. We're almost there. Keep quiet a minute and I'll see if I can get the mood."

She reminded me of Mary Shaw taking a silent moment to hypnotize herself in the wings before going on for a tragic scene. I began to believe that there might be dramatic possibilities in Janet, after all.

We arrived at Cope's door, quiet and preoccupied. She gave our names to the Japanese boy absent-mindedly. We waited in the reception hall in silence—the hall of a Spanish-American museum, full of rusty grillwork and mission bells and worm-eaten wooden saints. Janet sat in an inquisitorial chair, with an air of wrapt devotion, her head bowed. When the Japanese boy returned for us, she rose for her stage entrance and gave me an encouraging and protective smile. I followed her in.

Cope was waiting for us at the far end of a studio-living-room as big as a church, in front of a fireplace that had been built in an alcove of bookshelves and fireside settles, very quaint and cozy. He looked like a monk in his long dressing gown and mediaeval slippers, standing to receive us, but still reading a manuscript, which he lowered to lay on the table as we approached. His eyes did not part with the page till Janet was near enough to begin some apology for intruding on him. Then he held out his hand, smiling hospitably, but without speaking, and looking from one to the other of us as she continued.

By the time we were seated in the firelight she had explained that she and I had been discussing the film of "Sappho" and that I had convinced her

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it should have a happy ending. He watched her and listened to her, his gaze moving reflectively from her pink sweater to her rose-pink cap, and then down again to the pink flush of excitement that had over-spread her olive pallor. He seemed perhaps mildly puzzled.

"You see," she explained, "as Sappho, I'll realize that Jean ought to marry and have children if he's ever to be happy—that he can't be happy with me in the sort of life we've been living, so I give him up to the girl he wants to marry; and then, after you've shown them on their honeymoon together, you show me sitting all alone, at a window or somewhere, trying to smile bravely and thinking of him. I don't think that would be just hokum, do you? I think it's true of lots of women. I know it is of me." She smiled at him, appealingly embarrassed, but determined to tell the truth. "*I'd* give up the man I loved, if I thought it would make him happier. I mean I would if I really loved him. I think that's what love is—real love." And then she shot an eloquently shy glance at me. And he understood.

He understood the change in her and the cause of it. He understood that we were in love with each other. His eyes opened slowly, enlightened. And I felt myself begin to redden with guilt and embarrassment. The little devil!

I took refuge in a search through my pockets for a cigarette.

"He's going to help me with mother," she went

on. "You see, the way we plan the ending, I'll have just as good a part as ever—better, even—but if she's opposed to it, I'm going to stand out against her. I'll have to some day. I ought to have, long ago. And I would have if I'd had anyone to help me. All my life I've wanted to, though I'm so fond of her and owe her so much." She had begun to pick at the hem of her silk sweater, her eyes down. "You—you don't know how—how cruel a mother can be. And no one ever helps you against her. I—I couldn't make the fight alone. If anyone had helped me it might have been different."

There were tears in her voice, and he was blinking at her, sincerely moved. I communed with my lifeless cigarette and got no response from it. There was a match safe on a table back in the room. I trusted they would understand that I was going for a light. I rose as inconspicuously as possible and withdrew from the picture.

And I did not return to it. I was too nervous. I had a sort of stage fright. I was sure that if I moved to rejoin them and caught Cope's eye, I should grin palely at him in a self-conscious confession that I was trying to play a part and knew I was doing it badly. I stood staring at the colored covers of some magazines on the table until I began to feel muscle-bound. Then I tiptoed from the stage to a bookcase in the wings, and pretended to be looking at the titles.

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I glanced back, once, over my shoulder. She was getting along very well without me. Cope was sitting on the settle beside her and patting one of her hands, while she used her handkerchief with the other. I think I must have felt sorry for him; I know his books struck me as pathetic.

They were book-agent sets of "universal" anthologies, collections of cabinet specimens of the universe's Best Literature, a row of universal history's Great Events (edited with paste pot and shears from all the uncopied historians of the second-hand bookshops) the universe's Greatest Speeches and Most Famous Lives and most approved old monographs of superseded Science; and beyond these was a ragtag of popular fiction evidently sent to him by literary agents who had moving-picture rights to sell.

The books struck me as pathetic, and my own position before them struck me as absurd. I could neither take on my role again nor escape it. And what a role! I had gone behind his back to tell his star what should be done with the end of his film. I had been making love to her. I had been setting her against her mother and obviously intriguing to gain a controlling influence over her, for some purpose of my own. I could foresee how Cope and Mamma Nast would get together, first thing in the morning, and prepare a little cup of necessary poison for me, and arrange a convincing story to tell Janet in order to account for my sudden de-

parture for another world. And I could foresee how Janet, as she listened to them, would bite a trembling, twisted under-lip—struggling to suppress a smile.

“Where are you?” she called, at last.

“I’m here,” I answered unconvincingly.

She must have divined, from my tone of voice, that she could get no aid from me. She finished her act alone, rose on a conspiring handclasp, and sauntered toward me with Cope. “It’s all right,” she assured me, smiling with triumphant tenderness. “He thinks our ending is right and he’s going to help me with mother.”

I muttered nothing intelligible. She slipped her arm through mine and swung me round, so that she might walk between us to the hall. “Don’t come out with us,” she cried, gaily, and dragged me away in a burst of high spirits, without waiting for the formal good-bys. “See you in the morning. Don’t forget your promise.”

He waved to us, smiling with his lips, a look of jealous speculation in his eyes.

She hurried to her car. “Home, please,” she ordered.

“What came over you?” she remonstrated, as we got in.

“You little devil,” I said, cornering her, “what made you pretend *I* was in love with you?”

“Well,” she said, “*I* pretended *I* was in love with *you*, didn’t *I*? ”

And whoop! She covered her face with her hands and began to laugh and to cry. "It's terrible and it's—it's perfectly ridiculous. He couldn't take his eyes off the pink. He—he hasn't looked at me like that for years. It's *too* funny! It's awful! He liked me the moment he saw me. I'm—I'm ashamed of myself. It's like trapping some animal. It's like being a decoy duck." She was sniffling and giggling together. "I can't love him if he's going to be so simple."

"Don't you worry," I warned her. "He's not going to be simple. You've made him jealous of me. You've made him think I have some plan up my sleeve—that I'm intriguing to get control of you and your mother so as to sell you moving-picture rights, probably. When you see what he'll do to me, you'll not think he's simple."

That sent her off into another hilarious choking fit. I had been "too funny"! I had looked "so queer"! What was I afraid of? He couldn't kill me, could he?

"All right," I said. "I don't care. I don't want to write any films, anyway. They bore me. But I don't want him to go out of his way to humiliate me publicly, and you can never tell what an egotist like that will do. I'll get my resignation ready tonight, and the first sign I see ——"

"No, no. You mustn't. You've got to help me. You mustn't back out now. I can't do it alone. I don't know what to do *next*."

"The first thing you'll do, if you want *me* to help you, you'll get it out of his crop that I'm in love with you."

"What's the disgrace in *that*? Lots of ——"

"Never mind. And quit pretending that you're in love with *me*."

"But I like you. I do, really."

"No doubt. I appreciate my charm. But you'll kindly resist it. Otherwise, by this time to-morrow night I'll be climbing mountains on the Limited."

"Very well." She sighed enormously. "All is over between us. Now what?"

It was easier to ask than to answer. So much depended on her ability to manage her mother. And how did Mamma Nast feel toward Cope, and what had been the terms of their association in the past? And what was the honest truth of Janet's relations with him during all those years?

She explained the last quite frankly. When she first began to work with Cope, she knew—she could tell from the way he looked at her—that he was—well, that he liked her. But Cope must have been aware that if her mother saw he was in love with Janet it would be the end of him; so he was very formal and discreet in his manner toward her. Naturally, Janet thought that cowardly of him. She despised it. She made herself feel that she despised *him*. She behaved to him with a studied and slighting indifference.

Then, as their films succeeded, he became more

and more important in their partnership, so that her mother would have hesitated to break with him, even if she had known that he was in love with her daughter. But by that time Janet's attitude to him had become fixed. She was too proud to change it. She would not make any advances to him. She saw many repellent littlenesses in him, and she exaggerated them in her own eyes, so as to justify to herself her manner toward him. "I don't wonder," she said, "that he's been afraid of me."

Did her mother realize, now, how important it was to keep him?

"Yes," she said, "I think so. She's been very diplomatic about a lot of things lately. You see, we're not making so much money as we used to, and—though they don't tell me—I know they think it's because the public's tired of *me*. Everybody agrees that he's a great director. All the critics say so. But they're complaining that I'm 'cold'!—that I have no charm any more."

She broke a little on that confession. I hurried her away from it. "Suppose you were to tell your mother that he's in love with Mary Merivale, and that he's likely to leave you because of this dispute about the end of 'Sappho,' and take Mary and make a star of her, would your mother help you to hold him?"

"I think so. She suspects what's the matter with him. She told me so this afternoon."

"Well, then, what would she do if you told her

that *you* were in love with him and wanted to marry him?"

"I don't know. She dislikes him. She thinks he's conceited and unmanly."

"Those are the defects of his qualities."

"I know. I understand him. But *she* doesn't."

"Then you don't think it would be wise to tell her?"

She hesitated. "No."

"We're clear this far, then: you can tell her what the situation is between Cope and Mary and get her to help break it up. But you have to take Cope's side in a quarrel with her, in order to work the symbol of the cruel parent on him. I'm afraid of a real quarrel with your mother. Aren't you?"

"Yes," she admitted. "I couldn't go through with it. I'm too fond of her."

"That's what I feared. And she's too clever to be taken in by a pretense of a quarrel. That leaves only one chance. You'll have to get her to stage a quarrel with you and act the cruel and unnatural parent for Cope's benefit."

"How can I get her to do *that*? What reason can I give her?"

The car had drawn up at her door. "I haven't the slightest idea," I said. "Good night."

"But you can't!" she wailed. "You can't leave me like this. You've got to help me!"

"You don't need any help," I assured her, sincerely. "You're much cleverer than I thought."

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I backed out of the car in spite of her protests. "Say good night to your mother for me. And be kind to Cope."

"Coward!" she shot at me.

I waved my hat to her, as a white flag of etiquette, and departed on the run. I had had enough amateur psychiatry for one day.

### 11

I might better have stayed. My curiosity kept me awake half the night, wondering what she would say to her mother, and how her mother would take it, and what they would decide to tell Cope, and how, for his part, Cope would proceed to handle my supposed affair with Janet. I was as obsessed by the situation as if it had developed in a story I was trying to write; and I dramatized the logical incidents of alternative plots unceasingly and to no convincing end.

You know how the midnight-brain of insomnia magnifies its worries. I began to feel the social responsibilities of influencing, or even trying to influence, such important public characters. They were setting the standards of the nation in their films, and not merely standards of clothes and ways of living, but of manners and ambitions, of morals and ideals. If Cope and Janet Nast married happily, wouldn't they reflect their new view of life in more encouraging pictures of matrimony? What an effect

that might have on the American public who received from Cope, now, nothing but a cynical Broadway view of marriage! And shouldn't I be finally responsible for having caused the change?

I was hugely vague about it. My thought moved in a large sleepy delusion of grandeur. I fancied myself rather as the Baron Stockmar of the situation, arranging his pupil's marriage with Queen Victoria and foreseeing the million implications of what that marriage would mean to the Victorian period, with its ideal of royal respectability and the white flower of a blameless married life.

I fell asleep feeling important.

In the morning I woke to a pessimistic view of my effect on the world, because at the foot of the bed there were a little table covered with a face towel, a round black tray, a thick crockery water pitcher standing on its head, and an upended thick glass beside it. I knew, without looking, that the tray was decorated with an all-over design of gilt asterisks. For how many years, in how many American hotels, had I seen this unvarying bedside arrangement! Who had decreed it? No one. Who could change it? No one. Wars might come, revolutions, earthquakes, panics, social and moral upheavals and volcanic change; but at the end of it all, if you walked into any of the bedrooms in any of these commercial hotels, you would still find the little black tray of gilt asterisks, the thick white crockery water pitcher on its head, the heavy drink-

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ing glass, the towel tablecover with the hotel name worked on it in red thread, and the inevitable bedside table. The mystery of human habit! The eternal inertia of human life! The incredible durability of unreasonable reality! In such a world, what difference would it make what Cope learned or taught about women or marriage or anything else? No difference whatever. None. Not a particle.

In that mood I shaved myself. And why did I shave? Who had ordained that all American men should shave their faces, but not, like the Chinese, their heads? Why must I wear a collar and tie? Why must I put my watch in the left-hand pocket of my waistcoat and my small change in the right? Mysteries! Set and unalterable mysteries! I went downstairs to breakfast. Why must I have coffee for breakfast, grapefruit, bacon? Who could now change that American ideal of the morning meal? No mortal power. Yet people worried about the dangers of a bloody revolution if radical agitators continued to be agitated! And I had felt important at the prospect of influencing the themes of Cope's moving pictures so as to correct their ill effect on the young American male mind!

I started out for the studio feeling a godlike superiority to myself and an exalted indifference to Cope and his love affairs; and when I arrived at the lot I saw it as trivial as an ant hill. The scenario department was in a ridiculous shack. They do not have to build against the weather in Los

Angeles. They make a moving-picture office out of wall board and scantlings, as massive as a house of cards. I stood in front of the scenario department and blew at it, experimentally. I was not surprised to see the door fly open. I had expected to see the side of the wall cave in.

The boy who had opened the door announced, "They want you in Mr. Cope's office."

You cannot explain these moods to an office boy. I had to pretend that Cope was important, and go to see what he wanted.

I went with indifference. And it was an indifference that insulated me and protected me from Cope. Any meeting with such a man is a dangerous confrontation. Sensitive artists of his type, who have come up out of a neglected childhood, arrive with an ego that is all pride and thin skin. In their fearful younger days they watched and studied everyone around them, apprehensively, not knowing from whom the next cruelty might come; consequently, they have the habit of being very alert and knowing and apparently intuitive in their human contacts. They penetrate you by an act of sympathetic imagination, and what they perceive that is dangerous to them their egotism marks with immediate alarm. They are always asking for comment on their art, and they are not to be deceived by servile praise; yet criticism can hardly be made so diplomatic that it will not offend them; and once their Napoleonic ego is offended, they are

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as Corsican as Napoleon in their pursuit of revenge. The theater is full of them—actors, writers, directors, and producing managers. They make the production of a play an infuriating adventure in diplomacy. I went in to Cope with a long experience of him in the back of my mind, under the immediate indifference.

He had an office of green wicker furniture and green grass rugs, chintz curtains and cushions, flowers on his desk and sunlight in his windows, all very airy and summery and aesthetic. He was in light clothes and a polka-dot tie, and the tie struck me as significant. I had never seen him wear anything but a black cravat before. And he was cordial. Why? It was not the cordiality of condescension. It was friendly.

He wanted to talk to me about the ending of "Sappho," he said. Of course, what he wanted to do was to warn me against going behind his authority to discuss his scenarios with any of his cast. "You have to be careful what you say to these people, they're so temperamental." I caught his assumption of our equal superiority to actors. "Fortunately, the ending you suggested falls in with my plans. And it's good—it's extremely good."

He was more than friendly. He was treating me with respect. Undoubtedly! And I was alarmed. Why respect? The picture producers in Los Angeles have an old feud with these "damn authors" who

are always complaining to the public that "we've spoiled their stuff." Why now, suddenly, respect?

The tone of a carefully discreet reference to Janet Nast gave me the clue; in spite of his care, there was jealousy in his manner. Was he respectful because he thought I had succeeded in arousing some sentimental response in Janet, the forbidding, the unapproachable, the watched and guarded. The male animal of this sort is amusing. In his predacious eye, any love affair is a scalp on the belt, and here was a scalp indeed! Nasty Janie's!

He had heard something of my criticism of her at luncheon, and he asked me what I had said. It was impossible to tell him. I could not offer him that theory of the subconscious mind in the movies. If he had never heard of it—which was likely—it would come to him as a criticism of his ignorance, and offend him. Besides, as an artistic egotist, he would be insulted by the idea that his pictures had been the product of anything but his sovereign directing intelligence. I compromised by explaining that I had criticized Janet Nast without knowing her, and that since meeting her I had changed my opinion.

It was true, but not true in the way that he took it. He accepted it as indicating less a change of opinion than a change of heart. I let him.

"You see," I said ingenuously, "I found that what I was criticizing in her was really the effect of her mother's tyranny. That's why I stirred her up to

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revolt." And I tried to explain to him how her feeling against her mother, repressed by her dutiful affection, came out in bitterness and dissatisfaction with everybody and everything except Mamma Nast. "You'll see a change in her," I predicted, "if we can get her emotional responses normal."

He replied, with a straight face, "I see a change in her already." While he was replying, his desk phone rang. He swung around to take it, giving me his back and shoulders, and there was something too sudden in the movement; it was as if he had ducked to hide a grin. As he listened, I saw his scalp move back on his head. He had evidently raised his eyebrows in some expression that he wished to hide from me, but his voice was merely formal. "Ask Miss Nast to come in."

I rose to leave. "Don't go," he said. "We can discuss our new ending together." And the tone in which he said "our" was just a trifle off.

He was enjoying some little game of superior acuteness with himself, and applauding it with a psychic chuckle. I nodded. I foresaw that my turn to chuckle might arrive with Janet.

And it arrived.

She burst in like an ingenue. "I've done it," she announced, excitedly, before she had closed the door.

"Done what?"

She made a dramatic gesture that said, "Wait a moment." She shut the door and came over to us, and stood swallowing, her lips twitching, as if she

were unable to speak for the exultation that caught in her throat. And then, unexpectedly, the twitching became a pathetic trembling of the mouth, and she sat down, unable to speak.

“What’s the matter?”

“I’ve quarreled with my mother,” she said, in a painful voice.

“About the picture?”

She looked up at me through a bright film of tears. “About everything. I told her everything.”

“What did she say?”

She shook her head blindly. “She’s going away. For a little while. Now, you—you’ll have to help me. Both of you.” She appealed to Cope. “I don’t know how to do a thing for myself. I quarreled with her to get the picture done the way you want it, and you’ll have to help me. You’ll have to help me.”

We were both standing, Cope and I. He glanced at me. I looked past him, out the window, thoughtfully. And as I moved away from her, in the direction of my gaze, he went to her and placed his hand on her shoulder. “Don’t be afraid,” he said, very deep in the throat. “We’ll take care of you. What has happened?”

She confided her whole story to him. She had told her mother that the end of “Sappho” had to be played as he wished, and their argument about it had led to her declaration that she could no longer submit to her mother’s control. She was not a

child. She had a mind of her own, and she was determined to have a life of her own. She must have her own bank account and her own check book. She must be free to go and come as she pleased, without her mother's chaperonage. Mamma Nast might administer as she pleased her third interest in the film company, but Janet's interest was to be in her own hands; and whenever she agreed with Cope she would vote with him. And so forth.

She was very convincing to anyone who believed her, but I remained skeptical. She was wearing a frock with one of those boat-shaped necks that slip down on the shoulder. It had slipped far enough to expose a shoulder ribbon. And the ribbon was pink.

Cope seemed to have no suspicion. He comforted and reassured her, quite sincerely. It would all come out right in the end. Her mother might be angry for the moment, but that would pass. Work in the studio would be very much easier for everybody if Janet were free to use her own mind and have her own way.

She listened to him, full of girlish emotion, her eyes moist and grateful, very sweet to see. And she lifted her gaze to him with that flattering air of sitting at his feet which any man not blinded by his own egotism might well distrust. He liked it. He smiled and cheered her. There began to be a note of gratified authority in his consolations.

"Well," he said, at last, "they're waiting for us on the set." He gave her a final pat on the pink

shoulder strap, and went back to his desk. He took up some papers and put them in his breast pocket with the air of one in complete command.

She rose dutifully.

"Can you join me here," he asked, "after luncheon, to go over the new ending?"

He did not ask me.

She said, "Yes," and glanced toward me speculatively.

I was crossing to my chair to get my hat. She smiled at me with an abrupt brilliancy and I knew some devilment was coming. "I didn't tell her," she said to me, shyly, "about—you know—what we were talking about."

Cope became suddenly motionless, pretending to read a letter that lay on his blotter.

It seemed to me that he deserved a little jolt. I imitated her confiding accent. "Why should you," I insinuated, "if you're to be free to live your own life?"

The slightest flicker of an eyelid showed that she understood the aim of that shaft. Cope raised his head slowly and stared at us like a deer in covert.

"I'll owe it all to you," she said, "if it turns out happily."

I got my back to him, escorting her out. "All I ask is to see you happy."

We went out without waiting for him, and started down the long hall. She had begun to cough and redden.

"Don't laugh," I pleaded. "It's my funeral.

He'll never let you get rid of your mother only to see you fall for me."

She caught my arm, staggering.

"If he sees you laughing," I warned her, "it 'll ruin everything."

"If I don't laugh," she gasped, "I'll choke."

"Well," I said, "I'm glad it's not *me* you're pursuing. I couldn't wish him a worse fate. How can you laugh at the man you're going to marry?"

"Oh dear!" She caught a long sobering breath. "He's such a simp, isn't he? He's so—so transparent. I think that's why I like him. I wouldn't dare marry a man I couldn't laugh at. Let's wait here for him."

We were at an angle of the hall where it turned to go out to the stages. We looked back to see Cope coming. "Tell me," I said. "You didn't really quarrel with your mother."

She shook her head, smiling. "She's all right. She's a good sport. She's helping me."

I waved her off. "You're too much for me. Good-by. Cope was right to be afraid of you. Delilah!"

She replied, leaning to me in a charming burlesque of seductiveness: "Philistine! Shall I sell my Samson to you?" And I fled.

Something that had happened among us inspired Cope to a fit of furious application to his work. It may have been the feeling of freedom from Mamma

Nast's interference and the desire to make good use of that liberty while it lasted. Or the rowel of jealousy may have spurred him on to show Janet what an artist he could be. Or he may have felt the need of maximizing his ego in my eyes—and Mary Merivale's. In any case, even granting all four aims, he succeeded, to my knowledge, in at least three. He made a masterpiece of his fancy dress ball, he made Janet proud of him, and he convinced me that he was something of a genius.

He had already taken several long shots of his dancers in the mass, and I supposed that he intended to let these suffice, as a lazy reporter would be satisfied to describe such a scene in meaningless generalities. Not so. He began now to build up his picture on the screen with little individual incidents of the dance and interesting close-ups of the dancers. He began to get laughing groups that had much of the rollicking robustiousness of Franz Hals. He seized on commonplace-looking characters, changed them, rehearsed them, vivified them with his imagination, and individualized them in illuminating bits of action that were as real and personal as life itself. He plucked out of the crowd a conventional clown, painted his eyes in blind black hollows, widened his mouth in a melancholy black droop, lengthened his white sleeves till they hung six inches over his hands like the sleeves of a scarecrow—or a shroud—and then took this grotesque and drooping figure of bizarre tragedy and carried him as a grin-

ning death's head through all the wildest passages of Bohemian jollity. He succeeded in composing a masquerade ball that was really spirited and bacchanalian and not humanly incredible. And he devised a new meeting between Jean and Sappho, with the prophetic clown watching them through the fronds of a potted palm, and made the scene as idyllically sinister as a first meeting between Adam and Eve with the serpent spying.

He drove himself and everybody else unmercifully, possessed by his ideas and determined to realize them; but he worked quietly, slowly, absorbed and careful, without pose and without self-consciousness. He had not the sort of ego that shouts and tramples. He was patient. He was diplomatic. He knew exactly what he wanted; he knew that it was worth getting; and he got it.

He did not let them stop for luncheon. They sent out for sandwiches and drank soft drinks out of pop bottles between scenes. Late in the afternoon I came down from the musicians' gallery over the ballroom, where I had been watching, too interested to think of food, and begged a crust from Janet Nast.

She was triumphant. "How much am I bid for Samson now?" she crowed.

"No doubt of it," I admitted. "He's a whale."

"You don't know the half of it. Wait till you see some of these bits in the projection room. I'm going to see them with him."

"Have you been doing that in the past?"

\ She shook her head.

"Then keep away from it. He'll never let you or anyone else share in his work. Don't make that mistake. It's mother's child. Whether it's good or bad, it's *his*, and he'll have no one influencing it. How's he getting on with Mary Merivale?"

"He never notices any of us when he's like this," she complained.

"Not consciously, no; but if you want to influence him without his being aware of how you're doing it, now's the time to get in your dirty work."

"If you don't stop speaking of it in those terms, I'll stop talking to you at all."

"I'll watch you," I said, going back to my gallery.

We were on that scene for three days more before Cope, satisfied that he had done his best, gave the order to pay off the extra people and scrap the ball-room set. By that time all the studio staff had noticed the change in Nasty Janie. They attributed it to her mother's absence. Mamma Nast, it was reported, had gone to New York on a business trip, and they all shared in the feeling of release which seemed to show so prettily in Janet. She had become quite friendly and pleasant with everybody. She did not overdo it. She let it grow on them by patient, slow degrees. She allowed Billy to make a public capture of her heart, and then Billy's sister. She took them into her bungalow dressing-room and shared her lunches with them. She invited them to visit her in her Beverly Hills house, pleading that she

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was lonely while her mother was away. She won Billy very easily with a Shetland pony. She won Mary with a detailed plan for putting Billy in her next picture. They became an indissoluble trio, and Cope had to talk to Mary under Janet's eye or not at all.

It was the custom in Cope's studio to dye in a tint of blue all the white materials in a scene, so as to tone down the harsh glare of white in the photograph. Janet asked that the materials in her scenes should be dyed pink, and this—though it would have been taken as a typical Nast interference in the past—was accepted by the staff without unfriendly comment. Pink would serve the purpose as well as blue; she liked pink; blue depressed her. That was enough. They were glad to keep her amiable and happy, if pink would do it.

So it happened that when they came to do the sequence in which Sappho relinquished Jean and sent him to his fiancée, the set was a pink boudoir, and Janet arrived to play the scenes in a pink negligée. And it was not only Cope who blinked and stared. "Gosh! boy," one of the camera men muttered, "lead me to that baby doll."

She looked as sweet and fragile and innocent as a candy stick. Billy came with her, solemnly holding her hand, and she was twittering down to him like a young mother. Mary Merivale walked behind them as proud as a nurse maid. I thought to myself: "This will be a Sunday-school chromo of Sappho, and no mistake!"

Not so. When they began rehearsing the scene, she took on a maternal, sacrificial mood that lifted her out of mere prettiness. Her face was frankly distorted with suffering. Instead of caressing her lover she fumbled at him painfully with numb hands. Her stony suppression of tears choked the heart in you. Tears would have been a relief. You felt like pleading, "For Heaven's sake, let her cry!" But no. Even when her lover had gone and she stood looking out the window after him, her teeth chattered, but she did not break. And the way she tried to put up her shaking hand to cover the quivering of that wound of a mouth —!

Cope, beside himself with tearful delight, kept pleading: "Don't lose it! It's wonderful! Do it just like that! Camera!"

At first, he must have thought it was just a miraculous accident—as we all did. He must have been afraid that she could not repeat it—as we all were. But she took a long, hypnotized look at him each time, as if she were drawing her inspiration from his emotional response, and did it over and over, bit by bit, again and again, whether they wanted it for medium shots or close-ups. She got all of us excited and keyed up. The whole staff watched and worked in an intense, respectful silence. Cope, haggard and worn from his week of intensity, his nerves on edge, his voice husky, sat down after her last sequence was taken, put his face in his hands, and wept with relief.

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She ran to him, alarmed, and knelt beside his chair. "Don't do that," she said. "You've been working too hard. You mustn't! *Please!* Please don't!"

He took her hand and crushed it. "You—you're wonderful," he sobbed.

She signaled to the others to go away, shaking her head at them. As we withdrew, touched and tearful, she was helping him to his feet and taking him to her dressing room.

### 13

It seemed to me that something more serious than a nervous breakdown had happened to Cope; and I went to the studio, next morning, prepared to hear important news. There was nothing in the scenario department but talk about Janet's sudden blooming as a tragedienne. They were all enthusiastic. They had all been won by her. They loaded upon her absent mother the enmity which Janet had put off, and they blamed Mamma Nast for everything that had been unpleasant in Janet's past, including her arrested development as an actress. They agreed that if Cope had had a free hand with her earlier she would long ago have been the Duse and the Bernhardt of the screen.

In the midst of the discussion we were summoned to an editorial conference with Cope. We went eagerly and we were cordially received. He was in high spirits. In the confusion of our general arrival

he did not reply specifically to my greeting; and, remembering his passage with Cuthbert Anderson, I repeated my good morning, for fear he might not go on with the business in hand unless I spoke to him first. He ignored me pointedly. I wondered if it could be possible that he and Janet——

He wished, he said, to propose a new ending for "Sappho."

It had been planned that, after the scenes in which Jean was pictured as happy with his bride, the film should end by showing Sappho serving as an army nurse on the battlefield, with a subtitle specifying that she had been ennobled, not to say canonized, by the "supreme sacrifice." That had been thoroughly satisfactory to the scenarists. They had a cheerful suspicion that it was being planned during Mamma Nast's absence, against her will; and they looked forward gleefully to a battle between Cope and her when she returned. But now Cope proposed a new twist. He still wanted Sappho to give Jean up. Yes. And Jean was to go to his fiancée. Yes. But after a sequence that should show Jean miserable in the midst of the family's preparations for his wedding, the story ought to jump back to Sappho deserted at her window, and up the garden path to her, who is it she sees coming but Jean! He has returned to her. He can't be happy without her. Forgiveness—reconciliation—a hurried wedding—and off they go together to America and a new life.

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I did not offer any comment. I knew that it would be ignored and I knew why it would be ignored. I withdrew from the conference as tactfully as the situation permitted, and hunted up Janet in her dressing room.

"Congratulations," I said. "You'll not need to use the blond wig."

She looked startled.

"Don't you know you've won him?"

She stopped me with a "Ssh!" Her maid was in the room. She whispered, smiling: "It's a secret, yet."

"Fine!" We shook hands, victorious. "I'm sure you'll be happy. And now good-by!"

"Good-by? Aren't you going to stay and do a scenario for me?"

"No," I said, "I think not. I've been studying the way scenarios are written, and I don't think I'd be a success at it. It's a very difficult art. Very difficult. The personal equation enters into it too much for me."

"I'll help you with—with Samson—if that's what you mean."

"No. No, don't. And keep him out of the hands of the other Philistines. I'm going to say good-by to him. Give him a kiss for me. He deserves it."

He was polite and sympathetic, but he did not try to persuade me to stay. We parted coldly. I went back to my hotel to pack, and Gadkin heard the news of my recession with a gratified pessimism.

## SOME DISTINGUISHED AMERICANS

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"I told you," he said. "He's done. No body can work with that four-flush. He's got nothing but conceit. Nothing!"

I wanted to tell Gadkin that, as a matter of fact, Cope was just beginning, but I felt that the statement would be too difficult to support—unless I predicted his marriage and the change that has since come over the spirit of his films. If that change was not apparent enough in the ending of the "Sappho" picture, it must have been convincingly plain even to Gadkin in its successor.

"Never!" said the Publicity blurb. "Never! Never in the history of American art has such a symphony of mother love and wifely devotion been played upon the heart-strings of the world of theatergoers. See Janet Nast and weep with gladness. See Mary Merivale and smile through your tears."

I should like to know how their marriage is succeeding and how they get on with Mamma Nast; but the climate of southern California is so balmy that no one will write you a letter; the Copes have not been involved in the scandal of any Hollywood murders, so there is nothing about them in the newspapers; and you can't believe what you see in the motion-picture magazines. Read what they tell you about how scenarios are written!

THE END









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